Koviloor Digital Library

THE LIFE

OF THE

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY

HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN DISCIPLES,

THE ADVAITA ASHRAMA, HIMALAYAS.

IMS0701

THE SEMI-CENTENARY BIRTHDAY MEMORIAL EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

PUBLISHED BY THE SWAMI VIRAJANANDA FROM THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA OFFICE, ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS.

1915.

[All Rights Reserved.]

Price 3 Vols. Rs. 7, Foreigns $ 3 or 12 Shillings.

Koviloor Digital Library

PRINTED BY K. C. GHOSH
at the Lakshmi Printing Works,
68-C, Boloram De Street, CALCUTTA.

COPYRIGHT REGISTERED UNDER ACT XX OF 1847.

All rights of translation and reproduction are strictly reserved by the President, Advaita Ashrama. Permission for translation will be granted on certain terms. For particulars enquiries have to be made to him.

Koviloor Digital Library

Kovilqor Digital Library

Koviloor Digital Library

Table of Contents.

		Page
LXXXIX.	Among the Swami's Western Disciples ...	1
XC.	The Second Visit to England	18
XCI.	A Tour on the Continent	31
XCII.	The Last Days in London	48
XCIII.	Towards India	69
XCIV.	A National Reception : In Ceylon ...	84
XCV.	Triumphal Tour through Southern India ...	96
XCVI.	Historic Reception in Madras	104
XCVII.	Enthusiastic Reception in the City of Calcutta	116
XCVIII.	Conversations in the Seal's Garden ...	124
XCIX.	Reconstitution of the Order and Initiation of Disciples	137
C.	The Founding of the Ramakrishna Mission	150
CI.	The Master in Bhava Samadhi ...	157
CII.	Life in Calcutta	162
CIII.	In Almora	169
CIV.	The Further Spreading of Ideas : In Northern India	185
CV.	Life in the Math and the Metropolis ...	210
CVI.	The Training of the Western Disciples ...	227
CVII.	The Master at Naini Tal	237
CVIII.	Talks with Western Disciples at Almora ...	243
CIX.	Days of Travelling and Training : In Kashmir	257
CX.	At Amarnath and Kshirbhavani : Mystic Experiences	273
CXI.	Consecration of the Math : Its Scope and Ideals	291
CXII.	Amongst His own People	302
CXIII.	The Training of the Monastic Disciples ...	316
CXIV.	In the Passing of the Days	326

Koviloor Digital Library

CXV. How the Movement Went—I. (Preaching Work, 189,—June, 1899.) 337
CXVI. How the Movement Went—II. (Works of Service, 1897—June 1899.) 354
CXVII. Half-way Across the World 364
CXVIII. The Spreading of Vedanta in California ... 380
CXIX. The Paris Congress, and a Tour in Europe 398
CXX. Visit to Mayavati 419
A Word to Our Readers 441

Koviloor Digital Library

LXXXIX

AMONG THE SWAMI'S WESTERN DISCIPLES.

Before proceeding further it is expedient to mention and classify the more important of the Swami's Western disciples, as the narrative of his life is inseparably interrelated with their interests and activities in his cause. It is well to do so now, before his second visit to England, as it was then that he gathered together some of the more important of his disciples; not that he had not made others previously, both in America and on his first visit to England, but because it was about this time that he formed definitely a nucleus both for his American and his Indian work. The Vedanta Society in America had now been established on a firm footing; the Vedanta movement in England was now about to be organised, and the time was now also fast approaching when he was to introduce some of the Western element in his Indian work. In all his manifold activity at this time and henceforth, one sees certain persons prominently identified with his work and sacrificing themselves therein. It is exceedingly difficult, however, to classify the disciples from a personal point of view, as each follower, on becoming his disciple gave himself or herself heart and soul to the Swami's cause. They were actuated, one and all, by the same enthusiasm, according to their capabilities, and he was equally the ideal of them all. It is also difficult to classify them from a chronological point of view, as many of them met him simultaneously. Then, too, each disciple was identified with respective portions of his work, each being essentially necessary in the carrying out of his general ideas and plans. Then, too, to add to the difficulty, several who did much for him financially were only followers or admirers and not disciples, in the strictly technical sense of the word. They cannot be said to have given their lives to him, however,

Koviloor Digital Library

and therefore it seems wisest to speak first of all of those whose lives were radically affected by his teaching, and whose destinies were changed by the changes that affected his own life. Another difficulty is that, as in the case of the disciples of the Swami's Master, several of the Swami's most earnest intimate and efficient followers filled inconspicuous, though nevertheless important, positions in connection with his life and his work. And therefore, because they were not before the public eye, or because their names have not been so often mentioned in this work, it is not to be supposed that they were on that account to be regarded as less significant adherents. And then again, there were many who were his staunchest friends and admirers, though not followers or disciples, who did most valuable service in defending or furthering his cause in the West out of their sense of justice, and their love and regard for his character and personality and the universality and grandeur of the views of which he was the exponent. It is impossible to mention each of them separately here, taking note of their respective services. Consequently, the following must be an incomplete list, in view of the number of those who, in one way or another, helped the Master, before this and afterwards, in spreading his message of Vedanta in the West, or did their best for the advancement of his mission in India.

In America, the country where he began his public preaching, he had entrusted the charge of his work, on both occasions of his visits to England, to Miss. S. E. Waldo, who knew him almost from the beginning; and it may be truly said that no other American disciple has carried on his American work more devotedly and strenuously and more faithfully than she. He often praised her highly, speaking of her as the one disciple fit to carry on the *Raja-Yoga* classes, involved as the *Raja-Yoga* teaching was with many intellectual and psychological subtleties, and requiring a teacher of its principles to be possessed of a thorough understanding of the internal nature of man and of the tendencies of students anxious to devote themselves to the realisation of its high

Koviloor Digital Library

ideals. She did much for the Swami personally also, giving him all the possible time and the best of her literary and philosophical powers. As has been said, she was a connection of the famous transcendental philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson. For years, she had been a deep student, and though advanced in years, she still spent much of her time in the study of comparative religions. Before that invaluable assistant, Mr. J. J. Goodwin, arrived on the scene, it was she who noted down most of the Swami's private and public utterances, and she has, to her credit, the compiling of the "*Inspired Talks*" containing some of the Swami's highest spiritual and philosophical pronouncements given out at the Thousand Island Park. The notes of these talks were taken down at the time by her in long hand, but were so accurate as to call forth an exclamation on the part of the Swami himself, who remarked, "How could you have caught my thought and words so perfectly? It was as if I heard myself speaking."

When the Swami took up his residence in Thirty-Ninth Street, New York City, it was Miss Waldo who alleviated many of the difficulties in which he found himself, by assisting in his personal affairs and in his housekeeping. The quarters were in a poor neighbourhood and the household utensils were common property to the inmates, for the Swami had rented only two rooms of a large boarding establishment. Knowing full well his delicate personal habits concerning food, by reason of his being a Hindu, it was Miss Waldo who, with her own hands, cleansed his dishes and cooking utensils, before as well as after his meals. She would come from her own home to perform these kindly services daily during his stay in these poor quarters. She encouraged him in his hours of illness or depression, being herself possessed of remarkably enthusiastic and ideal qualities. Her relationship to him was that of a most earnest disciple, and, though an elderly lady, her service to him was her pleasure and her worship at one and the same time. When he initiated her, the Swami allowed her to select her own *mantram*, and strange to say,

Koviloor Digital Library

she selected that which had been the *mantram* of his own Master. He would often come to her place and spend hours discoursing on philosophical subjects, or on the life of his Master and his own spiritual experiences. And he would be sometimes like a child, joyous, and free from care, and sing some song in Bengalee pertaining to the Absolute Brahman or to the Mother. She spent hours in taking down his utterances on *Raja-Yoga*, and in endeavouring to master the underlying spirit in his philosophy. And this she accomplished so well that he gave her, besides the religious name of *Hari Dâsi*, the significant title of *Yati Mâtâ*, or Mother of the self-controlled ones. During his absence in England she held classes and gave lectures on the various phases of the Vedanta philosophy, on numerous occasions, and both before and since the passing of the Swami, she has occupied herself, at various times, in propagating his philosophy, in editing some of his writings, in furthering the interests of the magazines of the Order, and lastly, leading the retired life of meditation and of prayer.

Among the followers who worked hardest for the Swami was Mr. J. J. Goodwin, whom it was Miss Waldo's good fortune to secure as a stenographer for him. He had come from England, shortly before the Swami's return from that country on his first visit, and was looking forward to some adventurous experience, his life having been a chequered one. He had then no settled religious views, and as a young man,—his age being twenty-three—faced life as it came. The Swami's disciples had heard of him and secured his services, the latter regarding the post from a purely business point of view. But hardly had two weeks elapsed when he had become a most devoted follower, occupying the same quarters as the Swami's, accompanying him wheresoever he went, and performing all manner of personal service to him. He was literally enamoured with his Master's personality, though he also admired and followed his teachings. He threw himself into his work, and it was a work that demanded all his time and energy. He alone, it was found, could keep

Koviloor Digital Library

up with the Swami, at the time of lecturing, all the other stenographers having failed to transcribe his utterances with sufficient rapidity or to grasp his ideas, thereby often confusing themselves and those who read their reports. Mr. Goodwin would take down a lengthy address in the evening, work through the night in typewriting off his stenographic reports, and then hasten towards midnight to the newspaper offices, the conductors of which were anxious to print the Swami's lectures, and this continued day after day. The Guru loved his disciple with infinite tenderness and initiated him into the practices and ideals of the Vedanta philosophy, so that he became an expert in grasping its contents and faithfully reporting them. It is needless to say that the Swami was grateful beyond words to his disciple. He could not speak too highly of him ; he saw in him a great Karma Yogin, one who could unselfishly perform work for the sake of work and who could live the life of ideals. Mr. Goodwin, of course, refused any remuneration as soon as he understood the Swami and had been with him for a fortnight. Though he came from the ordinary classes of society and his education was not of a scholarly type, he exhibited remarkable intellectual adaptabilities with reference to the Swami's work. His youth and his enthusiasm proved valuable stimuli. The Swami often spoke of him, saying, "He is chosen for my work. What would I do without him! If I have a mission, he is indeed a part of it." And his words were accompanied by his actions, for on no occasion would he enter a new field of work without taking with him this invaluable servant. And Mr. Goodwin performed all the duties of a travelling companion for his Guru, such as, massaging him at night when he was tired till he fell into sleep, nursing him and keeping up nights when he was ill, taking care of his clothes and personal belongings, and relieving him from many embarrassments to which his social inexperience in the West and his moods of absorption often made him liable. Of course, he accompanied the Swami to England on his second visit, and thence to India, where he passed away at the early age

Koviloor Digital Library

of twenty-six through the inclemencies of the Indian climate. Most of the important lectures delivered by the Swami in America, and in England, and all those given in India from Colombo to Almora, were taken down by Mr. Goodwin's hand. And when he suddenly passed away from an attack of enteric fever in Ootacamond,the Swami, who chanced to be at the time in distant Almora, was visibly affected. When the sad news reached him he wrote a poem, "*Requiescat in Pace*", that for its tenderness, its beauty and depth of feeling makes a sweet and touching appeal. To the Indian disciples of the Swami, Mr. Goodwin was a constant source of wonder. They could not understand how a European could so de-occidentalise himself and possess, even as one of them, the adoring and serving attitude of a Hindu devotee. Both with the *Gurubhais* of the Swami and his Indian and European disciples, the memory of Mr. Goodwin is a dear possession, and though many years have passed away, his personality is still an inspiration to them.

But perhaps the one who orientalised herself most completely was that eminent disciple of the Swami, Miss Margaret Noble, to whom he gave the religious name of the Sister Nivedita, the word Nivedita signifying "Offered unto the God". And verily was her life a consecration to the service of the Lord, who in the thought of her inmost heart incarnated Himself as Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. In the whole of India, her name is a household word ; and that it is so was because she was so pre-eminently a disciple of the Swami and made India and her people her very own. She regularly attended the Swami's classes in London and imbibed more and more of that great Vedanta spirit which she later on embodied so wondrously in her writings. She was as practical as metaphysical, and interpreted the Swami's message and mission as none else of his disciples has done. She had at that time a secret hope that she could be of service in his Indian work, and the Swami himself had also the notion that she would be of great assistance to him in his plan of campaign for women of his own country. And when

Koviloor Digital Library

he left England for India, there was somewhat of an understanding between Miss Noble and Miss Henrietta Müller, her friend, that sometime in the near future they would commence, under the auspices of the Swami, an educational work for India's women. A year later she followed him to India as Miss Müller's guest, and after having made a tour in the company of the Swami and some of his brother-monks, she settled in the Hindu quarter of Calcutta, living in the vicinity of Sarada Devi. Here, at the Swami's desire, she commenced, in a small way, that work for women which has since assumed larger proportions. Under the personal training of the Swami she was initiated into the world of Hinduism making the problems of the Indian experience her constant study, and adopting the mode and manners of the most rigid orthodox Hindu life. Denying herself the comforts of European life, she lived as a *Brahmachârini*, for the Swami had taken her on, shortly after her arrival in India, as a member of his monastic order. She dressed herself as a nun and was respected as such. If the Swami's other disciples made the Hindu ideals of the religious life their sole concern, the Sister Nivedita made the Indian ideals in general the aim of her experience and realisation. She brought to the study of Hinduism and of Indian problems the intellectual newness of a powerful Western mind, and the Swami himself encouraged and supported her in her unique and modernised interpretations of Indian ideals in keeping with their essential spirit. The Sister soon found a place in the public thought of her adopted land and made for herself a name in the world at large, both as an author and as a public-spirited Indian. The works that she has left behind her, have immortalised her in the imagination of her Indian readers. Her "*Web of Indian Life*", her study of the Swami in a work known as "*The Master as I Saw Him*", her numerous contributions to most of the celebrated journals in India, her "*Cradle Tales of Hinduism*," her famous "*Kali the Mother*", of themselves entitle her to the position of one of the foremost expositors of the Modern Transition in India. Her

Koviloor Digital Library

catholic spirit in dealing in an eclectic way with the religions and philosophies and social and civic movements in India, has appealed to the majority of prominent Indian thinkers. Indeed, it may be said that she was the spokesman of the Swami's movement in general. Also in the West, in many intellectual circles, she created for herself an enviable reputation as a scholar and a thinker. It may not be well-known that she assisted in some of the literary productions of several celebrities, with whom she exchanged personal and intellectual relationships. Her school was in some respects a pattern and a model in the present general movement towards the national education of the Indian women. At her demise, the leading journals of India, including some of the Anglo-Indian papers, eulogised her in glowing terms, regarding her as a seeress and an intellectual giant. Her connection with the public movements of India is too well-known to need comment. Though her ideas were, for the most, an inheritance from the Swami, she must be accredited with having presented them in such original methods of thinking as to clothe them in an entirely new garb and with additional meaning. It was her Master himself who gave her the incentive to take up the study of Indian history, and her uncommon perceptions concerning the organic unity of the Indian experience, both past and present, and her methods of Indianising Indian history must be ascribed to his inspiration. And his training of the Sister was by no means an easy task, for hers was a mind of intense prepossessions, and in overcoming some of these and in changing the character of others he had frequently to be severe. But between him and herself were the strong ties of Guru and disciple, which brought on, in time, a striking identity of intellectual purposes and perceptions.

It has been said by no less an authority than Professor T. K. Cheyne of Oxford University, that the Sister Nivedita's work, "*The Master as I Saw Him*", "may be placed among the choicest religious classics, below the various scriptures, on the same shelf with the *Confessions of St.*

Koviloor Digital Library

Augustine and Sabatier's *Life of St. Francis.*" Many other well-known literary critics have spoken of her literature as pervaded with an unusual insight, and those who knew her intimately said, that even her conversation was literature, and her ordinary habits of thought that of a genius, while, when she put her whole intellect in force, she revealed a startling glory of mind.

Indeed, in the spread of the Swami's movement in India, in particular, her figure stands out as its chief interpreter. For fifteen years till her passing away, she devoted herself untiringly to the cause of India and to the spread of the Swami's ideas, religious, educational and social, for the regeneration of his Motherland, holding herself solely responsible for her political views with which the Ramakrishna Mission had no connection.

Another disciple of the Swami, an American, who was intimately identified with the Sister Nivedita's work of educating Indian women is Miss Christina Greenstidel, commonly known, since her adoption of the life of consecration, as the Sister Christine. She gave up a lucrative post in the educational department of the city of Detroit and came to India, with the Swami's consent, in the early part of 1902, hoping to be of service in his educational plans. To her, also, he had communicated his ideas on the education of Indian women. In spite of the fact that the Swami passed away within a few months of her arrival, and in the face of enormous difficulties she shouldered the greater portion of the Sister Nivedita's school work, in order to allow the latter more time and opportunity to devote herself completely to her literary pursuits. Her place in the work is perhaps best told by the Sister Nivedita, with whom the Sister Christine lived and worked in a common cause for many years, and is still continuing the work with her health broken under the strain. The Sister Nivedita writes :—

"It must here be pointed out that the school in question proved even more tentative than I had imagined. In the autumn of 1903, the whole work for Indian women was taken up and organised by an American disciple, Sister Christine, and to her, and her faithfulness and initiative, alone,

Koviloor Digital Library

it owes all its success up to the present. From the experiment which I made in 1898 to 1899, was gathered only my own education."

To the Sister Christine must be given the credit of having introduced the most modern methods in her work. She is one of those disciples of the Master, who occupy an inconspicuous, though nevertheless important, part in his great scheme of the Indian Revival. The Swami had met her at Thousand Island Park, whither she had come with Mrs. J. Funke to receive his teaching. She had seen him on the platform when he lectured in Detroit in 1894, but at that time she did not meet him personally. The Master regarded her as an especially worthy and capable disciple, and his esteem for her was very high.

Of her, Mrs. Funke has written :—

"In speaking to me one day regarding those he wished to have a part in his life work, he said, 'They must be pure in heart'. There was one disciple of whom he hoped much. He evidently saw in her great possibilities for renunciation and self-sacrifice. He found me alone one day and asked me many questions regarding her life and environment, and after I had answered them all, he looked at me so wistfully and said : 'And she is pure, pure in soul, is it not ?' I simply answered, 'Yes, Swami, she is absolutely pure in heart.' His face lighted up and his eyes shone with divine fire ;—'I knew it, I felt it, I must have her for my work in Calcutta!' he said with enthusiasm. He then told me of his plans and hopes for the advancement of the women of India. 'Education is what they need' he would say, 'We must have a school in Calcutta'."

When the school was established, the monks of the Order used their influence with their friends and disciples to have their daughters sent. And when it was organised on a comparatively larger scale, following shortly upon the Swami's passing away, the two Sisters had already secured the confidence of the most orthodox families and drew even orthodox widows and married girls, *purdanashin* ladies, to their school,—an unprecedented happening in the history of Indian educational work. The usual course of instruction was given, but in accordance with the Swami's ideals, in the way of a comprehensive Hindu and Indian training.

The ideal of the Sisters was to make the school a success, not only from a numerical point of view, but to train those

Koviloor Digital Library

who came so as to make them fit to carry on the work later independently. For this reason, one part of the institution has resembled a normal training school for grown-up girls and widows, whilst the other division is composed of classes in which little girls are taught. The Swami thought of this school in the way of experiment which, proving successful, should be emulated in all parts of India, and he held that the school, though very small, prophesied the greatness, the glory and the future of Indian womanhood. He desired that the ideas which this school represented should find acceptance in all parts of India, and that other schools, similar to it in policy and character, should be started in all the large cities of India, and in time extend to the remotest and most out-of-the-way villages.

In another sphere of the Swami's plan of work, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Sevier performed the most important task, that of founding a monastic and publishing centre in the heart of the Himalayas, some considerable distance from Almora. They had met him on his second visit to England and at once a strange relationship, as of some past memory, formed itself between them and the Swami. Almost on the first occasion when he saw Mrs. Sevier, the Swami addressed her by the sweet name of "*Mother*", and to Mr. Sevier he at once manifested a most kind and intimate spirit. With these two he felt most at home, discussing with them all his plans and his troubles, as though he were their own child, for both Mr. and Mrs. Sevier were considerably older than he. From the very beginning he chose them, among others of his London followers, as his confidents and future helpers. He felt that he could always count on these two in any emergency that might arise. Never was he so free as in their company, and it was with them that he made a tour of the Continent at the end of the Spring season of his London work. With them also, he made his first return from the West to India. With them also, he travelled much in India itself. When he confided in them, in Switzerland, his desire to found a monastery in the Himalayas they readily consented, and

Koviloor Digital Library

thus they came to India to carry out his intention, which had meanwhile become their own. It was these two disciples who not only contributed largely in a financial way to the Swami's work, but actually renounced their worldly life to settle virtually as Sannyâsins in the land of Bhâratavarsha. It was they who took the whole responsibility of publishing the *Prabuddha Bharata* Magazine, with the co-operation of some of the Swami's Indian disciples, when it was transferred from Madras, and who founded a home for it in the distant Himalayas. It was the good fortune of "*Pitaji*", or Revered Father, as Mr. Sevier was called by the *Ashrama* members, to pass away while occupied with his heart and soul in his great work, and before his death he had the satisfaction of seeing a monastery started and in efficient working order, its principles being those of the Advaita Vedanta. His body was cremated within the monastery grounds.

Since his death the monks, with the help of "Mother", as Mrs. Sevier is called, and the President of the *Ashrama*, have succeeded in broadening the sphere and the influence of the *Prabuddha Bharata.* In their enormous and responsible undertaking, Mother and Pitaji were assisted by the Swami Swarupananda, a monk who enjoyed the highest confidence of Swamiji and was of a scholarly and a retiring disposition. At his demise in 1906, the Swami Virajananda was elected as the President, and it is to him that the publication of "*The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda*" is greatly to be attributed. The Swami Vivekananda entertained great hopes concerning his Himalayan centre, it being his desire to train and send out from here missionaries, both for India and America, to carry on his work, a desire that has met with some fulfilment.

Those that know the Western disciples who have worked in India, recognise in them the true spirit of discipleship and are amazed at their capacity for renunciation and at the way in which they have succeeded in adapting themselves to Indian manners, food, dress and custom. For others it is difficult to understand at first, how minds, trained in alien culture out-

Koviloor Digital Library

side the pale of the *Sanatana Dharma*, could so readily and thoroughly grasp and master the spirit of its contents. But the explanation lay in the fact that they had as their Guru, one who was in himself the embodiment of all the insight and the spirituality of the Indian philosophies, and who had a powerful personality to infuse his own spirit into his disciples belonging to any nationality. Hence it is that side by side the European and the Indian disciples of their great Teacher have worked for years in the joyous labour for a common cause, that of propagating the Swami's mission. The Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas proved the cosmopolitan centre, for here gathered disciples from all the provinces of India, and even from distant America. Five American gentlemen, influenced by the Swami's teachings, spent some years in this mountain monastery, living the life of the *Brahmachâryam*, and now and then visitors come from various parts of India in order to spend some time with the monks in peaceful retirement. The monks are in constant touch with persons and centres the world over. At other monastic centres of the Order of Ramakrishna, the same cosmopolitan character is evinced as far as practicable.

There were still others, who came to India as the Swami's followers. The most eminent of these was Mrs. Ole Bull, known widely in America on account of her philanthropy, culture, and social position, and famous the world over as the widow of the celebrated violinist. She became acquainted with the Swami from the very commencement of his American work and assisted him in a large way financially. He was often her guest at her residence in Cambridge, near Boston, and was the chief figure, on many occasions, at her well-known salons. Mrs. Bull was a woman of pre-eminent talents, and at her house she often had as callers and guests the most distinguished scholars of the world. Thus her name lent prestige to the Swami's movement in America. To the members of the Ramakrishna Mission she is held in great respect. She endowed the central monastery of the Order at Belur and helped the cause of the Mission and of

Koviloor Digital Library

India in various other ways. On her first visit to India she accompanied the Swami and some of his friends to Almora and Kashmir. She was always regarded with great love and esteem by all who knew her. It must be added of her that she also directly assisted the Swami in his plans by liberally contributing, both before and after his passing a way, to the maintenance of the school which he had entrusted to the Sister Nivedita's care. And as the deepest friendships were often formed between the Swami's followers, a warm love grew between herself and the Sister Nivedita, which continued in the case of both until the end of their lives.

Miss Henrietta Müller is a name that has indissolubly associated itself with the founding of the Belur Monastery, for it was she who presented the money wherewith to purchase the grounds for the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission. She knew the Swami both on his first visit to America and England and in India, and it was she, who together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and Mr. E. T. Sturdy, contributed towards the expenditures of the Swami's English work. Though possessed of large means, she was naturally of an ascetic bent of mind, and being also liberal-minded and spiritual in her religious outlook she found in the Swami's personality and teaching the essential facts for spiritual life. Once, in the latter part of 1896, coming under the influence of the Swami's teaching, she even decided to give up the world. But he persuaded her not to do so, but to help the world as much as she could, by remaining in it and living a selfless life. She was in constant touch, in one way or another, with the Swami's friends and was always interested in the character and success of his work. She often remarked that she was born as it were to assist him, and she did what lay in her power to put his work on a firm footing.

Another great English friend of the Swami was Mr. E. T. Sturdy who became interested in him and his work from his early career in the West. It was he who cordially invited him to England assuring him of his support and of his certain success there, and received him on his first visit to England,

Koviloor Digital Library

making the quarters of the Vedanta propaganda in his own residence. For years Mr. Sturdy, like his old friend, Miss Müller, had been interested in Oriental thought, and before his meeting with the Swami he had been a prominent member of the Theosophical Society, and had visited India where, in the mountains near Almora, he had for some time performed austerities, living the life of solitude and meditation. Meeting the Swami, he was at once captured by his brilliance of mind and personality, and became one of the best workers in his cause. With his help, on his second visit to England, he translated and published the *Narada Sutras* on *Bhakti* with comments; and it was he who published, in pamphlet form, most of the Swami's London lectures on *Jnana-Yoga*, and also his addresses on *Bhakti-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*. It was he, likewise, who organised and arranged the classes and class-work; and he was at all times energetic in arranging private interviews and drawing-room meetings for him, and introducing him to prominent and influential people in London. In a financial way Mr. Sturdy was invariably of staunch assistance also, and did whatsoever he could to relieve the Swami of worldly anxieties and responsibilities. The latter always recognised a dear and valuable friend in him, and when he returned to India he left the Swami Abhedananda and the welfare of the London Vedanta movement in his charge.

Amongst others who enjoyed a great personal friendship with the Swami may be mentioned Miss Josephine MacLeod. She was one of those who saw that he required much relief from his missionary labours, and it was constantly her pleasure—and she felt it her duty—to divert his mind from that tendency which possessed him, namely, to be too much abstracted with serious thought. For his friends observed that he was putting himself to great strain; and they feared that perhaps the body could not keep pace with the strenuousness of the intellectual tension. Whenever he was her guest, she made him feel that it was his privilege to come and go as the spirit moved him. Most others pressed

Koviloor Digital Library

him with serious questions, but Miss MacLeod left him entirely free, and with her buoyant nature would amuse him, but often the result would be that he would pour forth in her presence some of the most soul-inspiring utterances of his whole life. From the first she "recognised" the Swami as a Messenger of the Spirit, a Christ-Soul, and became an ardent champion of his cause. She had already studied the *Bhagavad-Gita* and her vision was moulded according to its teaching. She came to India from America in company with Mrs. Ole Bull and the Swami Saradananda, and with other Western disciples, spent many days with Swamiji, living in the neighbourhood of the Monastery at Belur. Afterwards, she, together with the celebrated French preacher, Pére Hyacinthe, and others visited Vienna, Constantinople and Athens with the Swami, and later accompanied him with others to Egypt for an excursion up the Nile. She paid still another visit to India, but this was the last time when she saw the Swami. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett were also counted by the Swami among his close friends ; and on several occasions he was their guest, both in America and in Paris.

All the foregoing persons were intimately acquainted with each other and by their group formed the important nucleus of the Swami's work. And, indeed, the mere fact that any one admired the Swami personally or his teaching, was of itself a sufficient form of introduction to this group. Amongst all the followers and disciples of the Swami there was instinctively a bond of deep relationship, which made them feel as if they were of one household.

Of course, there were hundreds of others in America, notably Mrs. Funke of Detroit and Mr. and Mrs. Hale of Chicago and their daughters, and many in England, whom the Swami regarded as some of his best friends and who in turn loved him deeply. But as they took no prominent part in his work, receiving his teaching only in a personal manner, they were not so closely identified with him publicly as those above mentioned. In New York and in California, in London and in Paris, throughout the length and breadth of

Koviloor Digital Library

America there are scattered persons, too numerous to mention, whose lives were moulded by the Swami's personality and message, and who do him reverence to this day as Teacher and Prophet. His writings and his photographs are to be seen in their houses, but, above all, his Spirit rests within their hearts. Some have passed away, but the others continue, in a quiet way, to propagate his teachings and inspire many with their reminiscences of his character and his life.

This chapter has been introduced as a sort of a key to the understanding of the Swami's movements in the West and later in India. The reader having become familiar with these names will be more readily enabled to accompany the Swami in his thoughts and in his work. He will see them as so many luminous forms, of which the personality of their Master was the Living Spirit.

Koviloor Digital Library

XC.

THE SECOND VISIT TO ENGLAND.

When the Swami Vivekananda reached England a pleasant surprise awaited him ; the Swami Saradananda had arrived in London from Calcutta, and had been since April the first the honoured guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. For several years the Swami had not seen any of his *gurubhâis*. Consequently his meeting with the Swami Saradananda was an event of great joy. It was like the meeting of two Apostles of the early Christian era. The Swami Saradananda brought all the news from India. He told his brother-monk about the monastery in Alumbazar and of each of the *gurubhâis*. Many were the happy reminiscences and exchanges of thought. The Swami was full of plans at the time and these he communicated to his brother-monk, who in turn wondered at his indefatigable energy and his apostolic fervour. He found that Vedanta had gained a large and enthusiastic following in London and that scores of influential persons revered the Swami's very name.

The Swami himself, foresaw the success that lay before him on this, his second visit to England. All who had known him during his previous sojourn in London welcomed him back most cordially. Together with the Swami Saradananda he made his home in St. George's Road, as the guest of Miss Muller and Mr. Sturdy. Soon he found himself teaching privately and preaching publicly ; and the fame of his personality and utterances travelled wide. In a short time many persons of distinction, students of comparative religion and earnest seekers after truth were visiting his quarters and he found himself introduced to many new people who became his steadfast followers. He talked to them on the philosophies of India and their relation to modern life and explained to them the various forms of Yoga, and thus gathered round him a considerable number

Koviloor Digital Library

of people desirous of seriously studying the whole problem of human existence by the new light held before them.

In the beginning of May, 1896, the Swami opened his classes in a regular way, lecturing mostly on Jnâna Yoga, or the Path of Wisdom. He seemed inspired, and as was his wont, he put his whole soul into his teaching in giving out his realisations. Numerous were the persons who acknowledged that his philosophy,and, above all, his personality, gave them an entirely new religious outlook.

Towards the end of May, he opened a series of Sunday lectures in one of the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, in Picadilly. The subjects were, "The Necessity of Religion," "A Universal Religion", and "The Real and the Apparent Man". These three lectures proving a great success, another course which was earnestly sought for was arranged in Princes' Hall for Sunday afternoons beginning from the end of June, and continuing until the middle of July. Among these lectures were "Bhakti Yoga," "Renunciation", and "Realisation." Besides these, the Swami held regularly each week five classes at which the attendance was uniformly good, and on Friday evenings a question-and-answer class, which especially did much educational work. In his first series of class lectures he dealt mainly with the history of the Aryan race, its developments, its religious advance, and the diffusion of its religious influence. Besides his class lectures on Jnâna Yoga, he gave a course of lessons on Râja Yoga. Then followed a series of discourses on Bhakti Yoga. Shorthand reports of these lectures were taken down by Mr. Goodwin. Besides these, numerous persons visited him, receiving private instruction, and press representatives sought him for interviews in the interest of their respective papers. The newness of his ideas attracted wide-spread attention.

But all these classes and Sunday lectures and interviews did not by any means cover the whole of the work the Swami was doing in England. He lectured, also, in many

Koviloor Digital Library

drawing-rooms, and at several well-known Clubs. At the invitation of Mrs. Annie Besant he spoke at her lodge in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, on Bhakti, to show his sympathy for all sects. Colonel Olcott was present there. Also he delivered an address on "The Hindu Idea of Soul" at the residence of Mrs. Martin.

In describing this pleasant function "The London American" of June 13, 1896, wrote :—

".....The Indian representative at that great gathering (the Parliament of Religions) was Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu with a marvellous grasp of his subject, and an equally marvellous power of expression. This interesting man is at present in London, and with her usual eagerness to learn and have others do the same, Mrs. Victor Biddulph Martin, of 17 Hyde Park Gate, South Kensington, London, on Wednesday afternoon, asked him to deliver an address at her house on 'The Hindu Idea of Soul.' The weather on Wednesday was wretched, but this did not prevent a large number of ladies and gentlemen accepting Mrs. Martin's hospitality. The address was, as its title would show, of a most fascinating nature, the Hindu theology being most graphically and picturesquely explained. After the address, general conversation took place over the tea-cups and the Hindu was plied with questions by several ladies who seemed to have studied the subject to some purpose. This, perhaps, was as interesting as the address itself, as it showed wherein the main difference lies between the Christian and Brahmin beliefs. It is the usual thing at Mrs. Martin's receptions to meet Americans, and on Wednesday we noticed many well-known faces. There were also present some members of the Royal Household, but these were strictly *incognito*. Mrs. Martin's drawing-room looked, as it always does, artistic from floor to ceiling. The room formed, indeed, a fitting stage for the Swami, who himself presented a picture with all the Eastern colouring in perfection. His dark, olive face, with its dignity of expression, his little yet powerful figure clothed in a long brown garment with a crimson girdle, and his raven-black hair made him look what in truth he is—the Hindu Swami (the Master), the expounder of an Oriental creed."

The Swami also spoke at Notting Hill Gate at the residence of Mrs. Hunt. About this time he addressed a large meeting at Wimbledon, when a good deal of helpful discussion followed the lecture and several other meetings of a similar nature were arranged for. At the Sesame Club, he delivered an address on "Education." The Swami Saradananda writing to the "Brahmavadin" of June 6th says :—

Koviloor Digital Library

"Swami Vivekananda has made a good beginning here. A large number of people attend his classes regularly and the lectures are most interesting. Canon Haweis, one of the leaders of the Anglican Church, came the other day and was much interested. He saw the Swami before, at the Chicago Fair, and loved him from that time. On Tuesday last the Swami lectured on Education at the Sesame Club. It is an important club got up by ladies for diffusing female education. In this he dealt with the old educational systems of India, pointed out clearly and impressively that the sole aim of the system was 'man-making' and not cramming, and compared it with the present system. He held that the mind of man is a reservoir of knowledge, and that all knowledge, present, past or future, is within man, manifested or non-manifested, and the object of every system of education should be to help the mind to manifest it. For instance, the Law of Gravitation was within man, and the fall of the apple helped Newton to think upon it and bring it out from within his mind....."

Swamiji was warmly received at the residence of Canon Wilberforce, where a levee was held in his honour, in which many distinguished ladies and gentlemen took part.

Mr. Eric Hammond in recording his reminiscences of the Swami's visit to London and especially of a lecture before a club says :—

"On his arrival in London, Swami Vivekananda was welcomed in the quiet, thoughtful, semi-calculating way to which Londoners generally habituate themselves. Perhaps the Missionary, everywhere, is met by an atmosphere not exactly antagonistic, but, at the best, doubtful. That Swamiji recognised this element of doubt and of wonderment is certain, and it is certain too, that his winning personality cleared a way through it and found glad welcome in many hearts.

"Clubs, societies, drawing-rooms opened their doors to him. Sets of students grouped themselves together in this quarter and that, and heard him at appointed intervals. His hearers, hearing him, longed to hear further.

"At one of these meetings, at the close of his address, a white-haired and well-known Philosopher said to the Swami, 'You have spoken splendidly, Sir, and I thank you heartily, but you have told us nothing new'. The lecturer's sonorous tones rang through the room in reply, 'Sir, I have told you the Truth. That, the Truth, is as old as the immemorial hills, as old as humanity, as old as the Creation, as old as the Great God. If I have told it in such words as will make you think, make you live up to your thinking, do I not do well in telling it?' The murmur of 'Hear ! Hear !' and the louder clapping of hands showed how com-

Koviloor Digital Library

pletely the Swami had carried his audience with him. One lady present on that occasion, and on many more, said, 'I have attended church services regularly all my life. Their monotony and lack of vitality had made them barren and distasteful. I went to them because others went and one hates to be peculiar. Since I heard the Swami, light has flooded into religion. It is real; it lives; it has a new glad meaning and is altogether transformed for me.'

" 'I will tell you how *I* came to know the Truth',continued the Swami, and in the telling they learned something of the earth-life of Sri Ramakrishna; the sublime simplicity of his character; his indefatigable search for Truth in this religious phase and that; his discovery and his fine proclamation of it :—'Where I am, there the Truth is !'

" 'I found Truth,' said the Swami, 'because I had it in my heart already. Do not deceive yourselves. Do not imagine you will find it in one creed or in another creed. It is within you. Your creed will not give it to you, *you* must give it to your creed. Men and priests give it various names. They bid you believe one thing and another thing Listen :—you have it within yourself, this pearl of great price. That which exists is one. Listen :—'Thou art That !'

"From first to last of this address he dwelt on the message of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. He had, he said, not one little word of his own to utter, not one infinitesimal thought of his own to unfold. Everything, every single thing, all he was himself, all he could be to us, all he might be to the world, came from that single source; from the pure soul, from the illimitable inspiration who seated 'there in my beloved India had solved the tremendous secret and bestowed the solution broadcast, ungrudgingly, with divine prodigality.'

"In passages of exquisite eloquence he dilated upon Sri Ramakrishna. Self was utterly forgotten, altogether ignored. 'I am what I am, and what I am is always due to him, whatever in me or in my words is good and true and eternal came to me from his mouth, his heart, his soul. Sri Ramakrishna is the spring of this phase of the earth's religious life, of its impulses and its activities. If I can show the world one glimpse of my Master I shall not live in vain.' "

One cannot pass by the above eloquent tribute of Swamiji to his Master without noting a beautiful phase of his character—how even in the midst of his triumphs when he was himself hailed on all sides as Master, he again and again pointed out in all humility that he was only a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna at whose feet he had learned everything, that the credit of his teaching was not his but was due to his Master. Indeed, only a true disciple can be a true Master.

Koviloor Digital Library

At this time, the Indian students resident in London naturally looked up to him for guidance. The Swami endeared himself to them all by making them feel quite at home with him and helping them in various ways. And so when on the 18th of July a social conference of Indian residents in Great Britain and Ireland was held under the auspices of the London Hindu Association, it was he who was asked to preside. The subject of the discourse was, "The Hindus and their Needs". At this meeting many English ladies and gentlemen were present.

The Swami worked indefatigably in these days, even more than he had done during his previous visit. It must be noted that even at that time in the midst of his multifarious activities he had devoted a good deal of his time to helping Mr. Sturdy to translate the "Narada Sutras" on Bhakti Yoga, as the latter had solicited his valued aid in this regard. The book which was published about this time, with copions commentaries by the Swami, was deservedly popular.

One of the memorable events, during the Swami's stay in London, was his meeting with the celebrated Orientalist, Professor Max Muller of Oxford University, at his residence, by special invitation, on the 28th of May. Of that pleasant experience the Swami himself wrote as follows to the "Brahmavadin" on June 6th :—

".....What an extraordinary man is Professor Max Muller ! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Sri Ramakrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to that person I hold as a pilgrimage.....

"The Professor was first induced to inquire about the power behind, which led to sudden and momentous changes in the life of the late Keshub Chandra Sen, the great Brahmo leader ; and since then, he has been an earnest student and admirer of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. 'Ramakrishna is worshipped by thousands to-day, Professor' I said. 'To whom else shall worship be accorded, if not to such ?' was his answer. The Professor was kindness itself, and asked Mr. Sturdy and myself to lunch with him. He showed us several colleges in Oxford, and the Bodleian Library. He also accompanied us to the railway station, and all this he did because, as he

Koviloor Digital Library

said, 'It is not every day one meets with a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa'.

"The visit was really a revelation to me. That nice little house its setting of a beautiful garden, the silver-headed sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child's in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India—the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our *Brahmarshis* and *Râjarshis*, the days of the great *Vânaprasthas*, the days of Arundhatis and Vasishthas.

"It was neither the Philologist nor the Scholar that I saw, but a soul that is everyday realising its oneness with the Brahman, a heart, that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. Where others lose themselves in the desert of dry details, he has struck the well-spring of life. Indeed his heart-beats have caught the rhythm of the Upanishads,—आत्मानं वै विजानथ, अन्यां वाचं विमुञ्चथ—'Know the Atman alone, and leave off all other talk.'

"Although a world-moving scholar and philosopher, his learning and philosophy have only led him higher and higher to the realisation of the Spirit, his अपराविद्या (lower Knowledge) has indeed helped him to reach the पराविद्या (Higher Knowledge). This is real learning. विद्या ददाति विनयम्—Knowledge gives humility. Of what use is knowledge if it does not show us the way to the Highest?

"And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland. Endued with an extraordinary, and, at the same time, an intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest of Sanskrit literature with deep interest and heart-felt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and coloured his whole being.

"Max Muller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. He has, indeed, caught the real soul of the melody of the Vedanta, in the midst of all its settings of harmonies and discords—the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of the world, the Vedanta, the one principle of which all religions are only applications. And what was Ramakrishna Paramahamsa? The practical demonstration of this ancient principle, the embodiment of India that is past, and a foreshadowing of the India that is to be, the bearer of spiritual light unto nations. The jeweller alone can understand the worth

Koviloor Digital Library

of jewels; this is an old proverb. Is it a wonder that this Western sage does study and appreciate every new star in the firmament of Indian thought, before even the Indians themselves realise its magnitude?

"'When are you coming to India? Every heart there would welcome one who has done so much to place the thoughts of their ancestors in the true light,' I said. The face of the aged sage brightened up—there was almost a tear in his eye, a gentle nodding of the head, and slowly the words came out,—'I would not return then; you would have to cremate me there'. Further questions seemed an unwarrantable intrusion into realms wherein are stored the holy secrets of man's heart. Who knows but that it was what the Poet said, 'He remembers with his mind the friendships of former births, firmly rooted in his heart.'

"His life has been a blessing to the world; and may it be many, many years more, before he changes the present plane of his existence."

This letter was written by the Swami shortly after the Professor had written an article, himself gathering information from Madras and Calcutta, concerning Sri Ramakrishna, which was to appear in the "*Nineteenth Century*", entitled "A Real Mahâtman." As the result of the enthusiasm with which the Swami had inspired him, he asked the Swami, "What are you doing to make him known to the world?" He was anxious to know more concerning the Master and said that he would be glad to write a larger and fuller account of his life and teachings, provided ampler facts and details were given him. When the Swami knew this he at once commissioned the Swami Saradananda to get into communication with India and to collect as much as was possible of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and also of the facts concerning his life. This was readily done; and the Professor set to work at once and embodied them in a book which has been published under the title, "The Life and Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna". This book breathes a fervid devotional and yet critical spirit and contains a most happy collection of the Master's sayings. It has aided materially in giving the Swami and his Mission a firmer hold in the English-speaking world. The Swami and the Professor were frequent correspondents and fast friends. Only in matters of philosophical criticism did they sometimes slightly differ.

The Swami was in the highest spiritual moods during

Koviloor Digital Library

his stay in London. Oftentimes he was all radiance and ecstasy, with infinite love and sympathy for everybody and everything, and nothing better illustrates this than a letter dated 6th July which he addressed to Mr. Francis H. Leggett in the endearing term of "Frankincense," and which reads as follows :—

"**Things are going on with me very well on this side of the Atlantic.

"The Sunday lectures were quite successful, so were the classes. The season has ended and I too am thoroughly exhausted. I am going to make a tour in Switzerland with Miss Muller.....

" * * Well, the work is growing silently yet surely in England. Almost every other man or woman came to me and talked about the work. This British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine, and they will spread all over the world. Of course, all great work is slow and the difficulties are too many, especially as we Hindus are the conquered race. Yet, that is the very reason why it is bound to work, for spiritual ideals have always come from the downtrodden. Jews overwhelmed the Roman Empire with their spiritual ideals. You will be pleased to know that I am also learning my lessons everyday in patience and, above all, in sympathy. I think I am beginning to see the Divine, even inside the haughty, 'Anglo-Indians'. I think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very 'Devil' himself, if there were any.

"At twenty I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic ; I would not walk on the footpath, on the theatre-side of the streets in Calcutta. At thirty-three I can live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them. Is it degenerate ? Or is it that I am broadening out into that Universal Love which is the Lord Himself? Again, I have heard that if one does not see the evil around him, he cannot do good work—he lapses into a sort of fatalism. I do not see that. On the other hand, my power of work is immensely increasing and becoming immensely effective. Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless every one, everything, love and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion. I am in one of these moods now, dear Francis, and am actually shedding tears of joy at the thought of your and Mrs. Legget's love and kindness to me. I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here ; and that Love Infinite that brought me into being, has guarded every one of my actions good or bad (don't be frightened), for what am I, what was I ever but a tool in His hands ?—for Whose service I have given up everything,—my Beloved, my Joy, my Life, my Love.

Koviloor Digital Library

He is my Playful Darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe. What reason binds Him? He the Playful One is playing these tears and laughter over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

"It is a funny world and the funniest Chap you ever saw is He,—the Beloved-Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play! They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

"I have learnt a thing or two: beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the 'Love', the 'Beloved'. Aye, 'Sake' fill up the cup and we will be mad.

Yours ever in madness,
Vivekananda."

Here one has the Swami Vivekananda himself. In a mood, almost touching the playful ecstasy of Saint Francis of Assisi, or bordering on that Divine Madness which possessed the Sufis of old, the Swami speaks in that beautiful license of the soul with the Beloved Lord which many saints have often manifested in their highest illumination.

Returning to a consideration of his work it is well to make several quotations here concerning it. The conservatism of the London papers is well-known, and hence one will appreciate such complimentary references to his Mission and his personality as the following:—

The London Daily Chronicle, in its issue of June 10, 1896, wrote:—

"The gentleman known as the Swami Vivekananda, who was one of the most striking features at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and who went there to expound the ancient teachings of India to the newest of Western nations, is at present in England, returning to his own land in December. The Swami is one of the living exponents of the Vedanta philosophy; his manner, distinguished appearance, the ease with which he expounds a profound philosophy, his mastery of the English tongue, explain the great cordiality with which the Americans received him and the fact that they almost compelled him to remain a year or two among them. The Swami has taken the vow of complete renunciation of worldly position, property and name. He cannot be said to belong to any religion, since his life is one of independent thought which draws

Koviloor Digital Library

from all religions. Those who desire that his teaching may be made known, arrange the entire business part of the work, and the lectures are, so far, made free. They may be heard at 63, St. George's Road, on Tuesday and Thursday, at half past eleven A.M. and half past eight P.M. up to the end of July. It is also announced that the Swami will lecture in one of the rooms of the Royal Institute of Water-colours, 191, Piccadilly, at half past three P.M. on Sundays."

In *The Country House* (Magazine) of June one reads:—

"All sorts and conditions of men are to be found in London, but probably the great city contains just now none more remarkable than the philosopher who represented the Hindu religion at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. In an unobtrusive way, he is still teaching and preaching, though the public knows but little of his work. I lately came across two or three little books containing his addresses on the Vedanta philosophy. It would be the merest flippancy to attempt on a cursory reading to discuss here and now the recondite subjects with which they deal. But they are singularly lucid in expression, and the ideas which they contain are set forth with much moderation and persuasiveness. The philosopher who elects to be known as Swami Vivekananda, believes he has a message for the world, and the burden of his theme is a universal religion. There has been of late a curious interest in the philosophy of the East, and the casual reader may obtain from these little books a tolerably clear idea of its general principles."

Speaking of the Swami's influence in London, "A Disciple" in the course of a long correspondence dated the 23rd of June, 1896, writes to "The Brahmavadin" from London:—

"...Meanwhile the fame of the Oriental ascetic spread all round the city of London and men of all professions and callings,—doctors, lawyers, professors, students—together with many ladies came to hear his beautiful exposition of the religion of his forefathers. The Rev. H. R. Haweis, the leading English authority on Church Music, and himself a delegate to the Chicago Parliament of Religions, from the Anglican Church, came to listen to him, and was so much impressed by his lectures that he himself preached two sermons last Sunday at St. James' Chapel, Marylebone, London, on the Swami. I wish those in India and elsewhere who are so eagerly following the Swami's movements could have heard the eloquent and generous tribute paid to him by this other worker in God's Vineyard. The Rev. gentleman spoke of the Swami's teachings from the point of view of the support they give to Christ's teachings, and what better evidence could I give than that the 'Ideal of a Universal Religion' is not falling on barren ground? Is not the object of all religions that which is embodied in the Vedic prayer :—

Koviloor Digital Library

'From the unreal lead us to the Real,
From darkness lead us unto Light,
From death lead us to Immortality.'

".....At the Class lecture yesterday morning a number of those who have been regularly attending, combined to guarantee a sum of money necessary to obtain quarters for the exposition of the Vedanta in London. The proposal includes a large room for regular lectures, a library of books on Eastern philosophy, including all translations of Sanskrit literature, and a monthly magazine....."

A well-known Journalist writes:—

"The best scientific minds of the day came to him and told him how wonderfully rational were the conclusions of the Vedanta, and some of them even stood by the hour to attend to his lectures....."

But no amount either of quotations or of original description will ever be able to gauge the import and the character of the Swami's work and the interest it created in London. It was more spiritual than organised. It affected the whole current of Anglican thought. Many ministers of the Gospel, and distinguished clergymen were caught up in the grandeur and the freshness of the thought he sent forth. Distinguished intellectual and society people were captivated until it seemed as if some great movement was about to be born in his name and as his mission. But he was to confer the spirit, leaving the form to be organised later, in whatsoever way it might come to pass. He often said of himself that he was not an organiser, but a preacher and a monk; and in this sense his work in England must be regarded. The work is still proceeding; and the time may yet come when his prophecy regarding the Orientalising of the whole religious thought in England will be fulfilled.

But apart from the public significance of the Swami's work in London, aye, even if he had done no public work this time, still his second visit would be memorable from one special feature which he prized above all others, as on this he was to make some of the most valuable relationships of his whole life and gather to his fold several of the most diligent and heroic workers and helpers in his cause. True, in his previous visit he had made acquaintances which ripened into friendship with such talented souls as Miss Henrietta Muller

Koviloor Digital Library

Miss M. E. Noble, Mr. E. T. Sturdy and others, but during this time they were to become his avowed disciples ready to sacrifice everything for him and his cause. And to this group, moreover, were added two of his most faithful disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, of whom we shall often have occasion to speak later. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier met Swamiji soon after his arrival in London, having heard from a mutual friend that a Hindu preacher was going to hold classes on Eastern philosophy. Both of them had been earnest students of religion and had sought for the Highest Truth in various sects and creeds, but none of them satisfied their yearning souls. They were disappointed with the prevalent forms and theological dogmas which passed by the name of religion. And hence with an expectant heart and open-minded attitude, though not unmixed with doubts, they came to listen to the exposition of a new religion from the mouth of an "Indian Yogi." What was the surprise of the devoted couple to find out, on comparing notes afterwards, that both of them felt intuitively and simultaneously when hearing the Swami that, "This is the man and this is the philosophy that we have been seeking in vain all through our life." What appealed to them most was, the Advaita philosophy. They at once became drawn towards the Swami as to one who was their Guru in past lives and whom they had met again in this. The very first time when they met Swamiji in private conversation, the latter addressed Mrs. Sevier as "Mother", the endearing epithet by which she has been called ever since by the Ramakrishna Brotherhood, and asked her, "Would you not like to come to India ? I will give you of my best realisations." Since that day they looked upon the Swami not only as their Guru but as their own son. Thus was established a sweet relationship which was to bring forth inestimable fruits in the fulfilment of one of the Swami's great missions to the West. Indeed, he held Sister Nivedita, J. J. Goodwin and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier as the fairest flowers of his work in England.

Koviloor Digital Library

XCI.

A TOUR ON THE CONTINENT.

Exhausted with the strenuous exertions of his London work the Swami accepted the invitation of three of his more intimate friends for a tour and a holiday on the Continent. He was "as delighted as a child" at the prospect, for there was nothing he enjoyed so much as a thorough relaxation. Those who planned the Swami's holiday and accompanied him on his tour, were Mr. and Mrs J. H. Sevier and Miss Henrietta Muller. For some time previous to the actual arrangements, these three had pressed the Swami to give up his lecturing work for the time being, as together with his many other friends, they felt that he could not much longer endure the strain he was undergoing and that he must unburden himself from his responsibilities. Then, too, it was the holiday season for London in general ; and many of the Swami's students and admirers were leaving the metropolis for sea-side or mountain resorts. When the suggestion was made to him, the Swami readily assented, believing that the change would benefit him greatly and make him fit to renew his work with greater energy. He was eager in particular to visit Switzerland. He said, "O ! I long to see the snows and wander on the mountain paths !" The old "Parivrâjaka" tendency was cropping up in him. And it was true that in Switzerland there were many occasions when his companions found "the wandering monk" in him. Many times, walking on the mountain paths, or standing on some great elevation, the longing and the freedom and the supreme insight of the monastic life, were imprinted on his face. His devoted hosts relieved him of all the incidental responsibilities of travel. Their one desire was that he should enjoy himself.

For some days previous to the departure, the Swami discussed their plans with his hosts and made many

Koviloor Digital Library

suggestions, which they in their turn, were eager to carry out. He was full of anticipation, and when the day of departure came, he was radiant with happiness and was truly himself,—the great teacher with the heart and spirit of a boy. The immediate destination was Geneva, famed for its wonderful scenery and beautiful retreats, and as one of the great centres of the Protestant Reformation. At this very time there was a national exhibition of Swiss products and Industries. Naturally, the Swami was interested to study these. Besides, there were the Castle of Chillon, with its poetic associations of Lord Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon", and the mountains and the beautiful Lake. In fact, Geneva, in some respects, is the very centre of Switzerland. Therefore, the Swami's hosts had made this city their immediate destination. But it was not only Geneva which attracted the party. The Swami said, "I must see Mont Blanc and the lovely village of Chamonix. Above all, I must cross a Glacier." A short tour in Switzerland was accordingly planned, and it was decided that among other things, the party should cross the famous glacier, "Mer-de-Glace."

On the morning of the departure, the Swami was all excitement. He had unburdened himself of the very thought of responsibilities. Several of his London friends formed a farewell party, but there was no sadness as he was to return within two months. So in the afternoon of one of the last days in July, the Swami and his friends left London with the best wishes of all his students and disciples, many of whom being unavoidably absent, sent him their message through Mr. E. T. Sturdy, their representative and the organiser of the Vedanta movement in London. Arriving at Dover, the party took passage to Calais. The English Channel, more often choppy, chanced on this occasion to be comparatively calm. In order to break the long journey between Calais and Geneva the travellers spent the night in Paris. On the following day, they resumed their journey, arriving in excellent spirits at Geneva. The Hotel at which the party found accommodation over-

Koviloor Digital Library

looked the beautiful and peaceful lake. The cool invigorating air, the intense blue of the waters, the sky and the fields, the picturesqueness of the houses, and the novelty of things about him deeply appealed to the Swami. Though somewhat tired from the long journey, he was impatient, after a brief rest, to be out of doors. Accompanied by his friends he spent the greater part of the day in the Exhibition grounds. He was exceedingly interested in the local arts and crafts, particularly the celebrated wood-carvings.

But the most interesting feature of the whole Exhibition, to the Swami's happy mind, was a large, captive baloon. As soon as he saw this, he exclaimed, "O ! We *must* go up in the baloon ! " The idea of floating in the air, safely and securely, took possession of him. The baloon was to carry passengers at sunset, and until that time the Swami was as impatient as a boy. He kept on repeating, "Isn't it time now ! It must be time now !" Mr. Sevier was also anxious to enjoy the sensation, but Mrs. Sevier, foreseeing probable unpleasantness at being suddenly hoisted in the air, preferred *terrafirma*. But the Swami would hear nothing of her objections, saying, "You must come with us ! We must all go up !" She finally acquiesced, and thereupon the party entered the baloon. Up—up—up ! The baloon sped upwards and upwards, like some great bird at ease in its own element. The day was perfect, the sunset itself gorgeous. There was not the slightest sensation of unpleasantness, for the baloon sailed steadily and smoothly in the evening air. The party enjoyed their experience immensely, though it was for a short time only. Far below them, the city of Geneva appeared like a great map, spread out for miles, while moving objects were almost indiscernible.

They were somewhat regretful when they found the baloon was on the descent. The Swami was anxious to go up again, but other interests intervened and the party returned to the hotel, after having satisfied, at a neighbouring restaurant, an appetite made vigorous by the rarefied air of the higher altitudes. As a souvenir of their aerial experience

Koviloor Digital Library

they carried with them from Geneva photographs taken of themselves on the Exhibition grounds immediately after the baloon had made its descent. The Swami is seen therein with his smiling face. Thus passed the first day at Geneva crowded with joyous associations.

Geneva is a great bathing-resort, and on the lake itself there are spacious bath-houses, with the unusual arrangement of the waters flowing through. Naturally the Swami was anxious to enjoy their refreshing pleasures. Twice during his short stay he availed himself of this opportunity. A visit to the Castle of Chillon ended a three days' sojourn in this historic city. It was originally intended to remain longer, but the programme was suddenly changed, and next the travellers went to the far-famed retreat of Chamounix, some forty miles away. When they approached this place the grand spectacle of Mont Blanc opened up to view, presenting a vision which the Swami said he had not enjoyed even amidst the Himalayas. He cried out, "This is really wonderful! Here we are actually in the midst of the snows. In India the snows are so far distant. One walks for days and days amidst the mountains to approach near them. Then again, these are only as hills compared with those mighty peaks that tower on the borders of Thibet. But this is beautiful! Come! let us make the ascent up Mont Blanc." His friends concurred, but when they reached their hotel, the guides told them that only skilled mountaineers could attempt such a feat. This was a disappointment to the Swami, but as he gazed through the telescope and saw the appallingly steep ascents, he granted that it was impracticable. However, he was bent on crossing a glacier at all costs. Without this, he felt, that his visit to Switzerland would be incomplete. Fortunately the famous Mer-de-Glace was within easy approach. Accordingly several days later, one sees the party travelling on mules to the village whence the passage over the glacier is commenced. The actual expedition was not so pleasant as the Swami had anticipated. He often found it difficult to keep his footing. Every now

Koviloor Digital Library

and then he would pause to gaze down the deep crevasses, or to admire the beautiful tints of green that were everywhere to be seen. After the glacier proper is crossed, a very steep ascent must be climbed to reach the village above. Whilst making this ascent, the Swami suffered from vertigo, a weakness he had not hitherto experienced. While in this state his foot slipped several times. He was, therefore, glad when without any untoward accident he reached the little chalet at the summit and was restored by a cup of refreshingly hot coffee.

On this journey, the Swami observing the characteristics of the peasantry, turned to his friends with the remark, "Why, these people in many of their manners and in their costumes remind me of the peasants in the hills of the Himalayas! Those long baskets that the people carry on their backs are exactly like those used in the mountainous districts of my country." Then he went on with a beautiful discourse concerning the Himalayas, narrating to his companions, with much tenderness and love, many of his holy associations thereof. And on this journey, those who were to be the founders of the Advaita Ashrama and dedicate their lives to it, heard here in the Himalayas of Europe for the first time of the Swami's longing to establish a monastery in the heart of his beloved Himalayas. He said, "O, I long for such a monastery where I can retire from the labours of my life and pass the rest of my days in meditation. It will be a centre for work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together and them I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedanta to the West, and the latter will devote their lives to the good of India. A thought, something akin to vision, crossed the minds of his disciples; and Mr. Sevier, speaking for himself and his wife, said, "How nice it would be, Swamiji, if this could be done. We must have such a monastery!" At the time, it was only a passing remark, but as the months went by, that stray remark made in the heights of the Alps, became transformed into prophecy, for that idea sank deeper

Koviloor Digital Library

and deeper in the hearts of those disciples and now in the recesses of the Himalayas the Swami's great desire is fulfilled through their practical help and co-operation.

From Chamounix, the travellers made an outing to the village of Little Saint Bernard. High above rises the famous Saint Bernard Pass, on the crest of which stands the celebrated hospice of the Augustinian monks, the highest inhabited spot in Europe. At the village of Little Saint Bernard, the Swami was shown a litter of Saint Bernard pups, descendants of the famous dogs, kept by the Augustinians at the hospice. Forgetful that the dogs could not stand an Indian climate, the Swami in his enthusiasm exclaimed, "I want one of those little puppies to take with me to India!" Fortunately for the dogs, they had been already sold,—as they often are even before their birth—for they would certainly have perished long before they could have reached their destination.

At the request of Miss Muller, the party next wandered on to an interesting retreat some miles away, where a sojourn of two weeks was made. The Swami was at his best in this village, nestling in the innermost recesses of the Alps. On all sides rose the snow-capped peaks ; all about was the silence and the peace of the village life. No rude note of worldliness crept in here. It was here that the Swami attained some of the most lucid and luminous spiritual moments of his life. A strange quiet obsessed him. He seemed far, far away from all worldly concerns. World and all thought of work were as if forgotten entirely. He was not even the Teacher. He was, as it were, the silent, meditating monk of old. Many times he walked silently on the mountain paths and his friends seemed to be caught up with him in a world of meditation and of peace. One of those who were with him in this wondrous fortnight says, "There seemed to be a great light about him, and a great stillness and peace. Never have I seen the Swami to such advantage. He seemed to communicate spirituality by a look or with a touch. One could almost read his thoughts which

Koviloor Digital Library

were of the highest, so transfigured! had his personality become !"

Two weeks of this quiet life completely restored the Swami. There was only one incident of a slightly disturbing character. He had been walking one morning with his friends, reciting and translating passages from the Upanishads, thus creating in the Alps, at least for his companions, an Indian atmosphere. On this morning, as on many others, he gradually dropped behind, being lost in reverent contemplation. After some short time, they saw him approaching rapidly, calling out in great excitement, "I have been saved by the grace of the Lord ! I nearly fell over a precipice. I was walking along, planting my alpen-stock firmly on the ground. Suddenly it sank through a deep crevice and I almost fell over the precipice. Certainly it was only a miracle that saved me !" His friends were greatly agitated when they heard this and congratulated themselves and the Swami over his marvellous escape. Thenceforth they took special care never again to leave him alone.

On the way homewards, there was a little mountain chapel. As the Swami saw it, he said quietly, "Do let us offer some flowers at the Feet of the Virgin !" His face shone with great tenderness and he went forth, one of the party accompanying him, and gathered some of the sweetest Alpine flowers. "Offer them at the Feet of the Virgin", he said to Mrs. Sevier, "as a token of my gratitude and devotion." He would have offered them himself, but lest the fact that he was not a Christian might cause objection, he had entrusted the flowers to her. And with a strange note of religious certainty, he added, "For She also is the Mother."

At this out-of-the-way village in Switzerland the Swami received news, which changed the course of his continental tour ; it was in the form of an urgent letter from the well-known Orientalist, Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel. He had written to the Swami's London address, cordially inviting him to visit him at his residence in Kiel. For some time past, this learned Professor

Koviloor Digital Library

had studied the Swami's lectures and utterances, and found in him an original thinker and, above all, a spiritual genius of the first magnitude. Interested as he deeply was in the Vedanta philosophy, and having recently returned from Hindusthan itself,he naturally desired to meet an enlightened teacher like the Swami and discuss philosophical questions with him. The Swami himself was again anxious to be on the move, and therefore, several days following the receipt of the Professor's letter which had been forwarded to him from London, he made plans to go to Kiel before his final return to England. But his hosts insisted that he should complete his Swiss tour before going to Kiel, and arranged that he should also see something of Germany on the way Urgent business, however, compelled Miss Muller to leave the party at Lucerne, the destination next in view.

At Lucerne, visits were paid to all the places of interest and, with the exception of Mr. Sevier, all made the ascent of Mount Rigi by the mountain railway, a fascinating experience, the view from the summit commanding one of the finest snow vistas in the world. Among other things which the Swami saw here was the monument to the Swiss guards, the main feature of which is a sleeping lion, carved in natural rock by the famous Thorwalsden, and so reflected in a pool below as to give a strange and majestic effect. He also passed through the two covered bridges across the Reuss, curiously ornamented with painted subjects, one notably being entitled the "Dance of Death". The museum of Lucerne was also visited, as well as the historic cathedral which contains the old organ with the celebrated "Vox Humana". The Swami was much interested in this voice produced by a special stop and resembling in every respect the voice of a man. Indeed, on hearing it, he thought that it was actually so. One day the travellers went by steamer across the beautiful Lake of Lucerne, and were charmed with the scenery on its banks. The Swami recalled when he saw the chapel, dedicated to Wilhelm Tell, the career of that great patriot. To add a human touch to the recital of his stay in Lucerne, it was

Koviloor Digital Library

here that he succeeded in securing the very hottest chillies—a favourite spice with Indians—that he had ever eaten in the West. The vendor was astounded to see him eat them raw and that with such evident gusto while he remarked "Haven't you anything hotter ?"

He was now restless to proceed onwards ; and so bidding farewell to his disciple, Miss Muller, he and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier journeyed to Zermatt, one of the beauty spots of Switzerland, where he hoped to climb the Kornergrat and to secure the view of the Matterhorn. But of the party only Mr. Sevier succeeded in reaching the summit, the air being too rarefied for the other two. The next move was made to Schaffhausen, where the Falls of the Rhine are seen at their best. The Swami spent some time musing at the scene, which reminded him of the gorgeous cascades in the Himalayas. Oftentimes, both in Zermatt and at Schaffhausen, a quiet and deeply spiritual mood came upon him. Was it that he felt here the solitude and the peace of the distant Himalayas, sacred in his memory with many spiritual experiences ?

From Schaffhausen the three tourists went to Heidelberg, the centre of one of the greatest German universities, where two days were spent. A visit to the university was made. The Swami was much surprised at the great culture of the Germans, and saw from the general character of the university curriculum what splendid opportunities for education the German students enjoyed. A visit was also paid to the castle above the city, where there is a cellar containing the largest cask in the world. From Heidelberg to Coblenz ! Here a halt was made for the night, and on the next day the party boarded a steamer to journey up the far-famed Rhine as far as the city of Cologne. The trip occupied from two to three days, during which the Swami showed great enthusiasm over the pretty scenery and peopled the old castles with the stories current in the German folk-lore. At Cologne the travellers left the steamer to spend several days in that interesting city. The Swami marvelled at the great cathe-

Koviloor Digital Library

dral and attended a service there, and also visited its sanctuary and treasury, rich in gold plate, jewelled crosses and religious vestments, almost unparalleled for their artistic fineness and wrought altogether by the hands of nuns and noble ladies.

Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had planned to take their guest from Cologne direct to Kiel, but he was anxious to see the great city of Berlin. His hosts, eager to please him, made a large detour, intending not only to visit Berlin, but Dresden as well. Every mile that the train journeyed onwards, found the Swami occupied with German subjects. He was struck with the general prosperity of the country and with the large number of its cities built after the modern style When he arrived at Berlin he granted that he now understood the greatness of the German people. The city, with its wide streets, fine monuments and beautiful parks made him draw a favourable contrast even with Paris itself. During their three days' stay the Swami's friends took him to every place of historic or intellectual importance. As for the German soldiery, he said, "What fine bearing and real military appearance they have !"

When he was informed that their next destination was Dresden, he hesitated saying, "Professor Deussen will be expecting us. We must not defer our visit longer." Accordingly the party proceeded to Kiel, and the Swami looked forward to hours of pleasant intellectual intercourse. A very interesting account of this visit recorded by Mrs. Sevier who, together with her husband, was also invited to be the guests of the Deussen family, is given here in full :—

"* * * Every phase of human activity, and every department of knowledge had interest for Swamiji, and his mental attitude of cheerfulness and kindness, combined with his fine intelligence and personal charm, made him the most delightful of travelling companions.

"* * * My recollection of Kiel, a town in Germany, which is beautifully situated on the Baltic, is bright with agreeable memories of a pleasant day spent in the society of Dr. Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy in the University there,—a man of rare philosophical grasp, standing foremost in the rank of European Sanskrit scholars.

Koviloor Digital Library

"On hearing that Swami had arrived at the Hotel, the Professor immediately sent a note requesting his company at breakfast on the following day, courteously including my husband and myself in the invitation. Punctually at 10 o'clock the next morning we presented ourselves at his house, and were ushered into the Library, where we received a cordial reception from Dr. and Mrs. Deussen who were expecting us. After a few preliminary inquiries regarding the travels and plans of Swamiji, I noticed the Professor directing his eyes to some volumes lying open on the table, and with a scholar's appreciation of learning, he soon turned the conversation on books. Selecting one, he read in Sanskrit two or three of the beautiful Slokas of the Upanishads, those golden sayings that ring in the memory, and reverberate so deeply, that even now, after such a lapse of time since their utterance, the spirit remains, and is vital in influencing one's ideas of life and death. He remarked that the study of the Vedas was an alluring recreation, and to climb the heights of those great altitudes, a wonderful means of enriching and widening the spiritual horizon, giving a sense of exhilaration as one rises to a higher atmosphere. He considered the system of the Vedanta as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras, with Shankaracharya's commentaries, some of the most majestic structures and valuable products of the genius of man in his search for Truth, and that the highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedanta. He quoted from an address he delivered before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on the 25th February, 1893, on which occasion he concluded with the following advice to his audience :—

" 'And so the Vedanta in its unfalsified form, is the strongest support of pure morality, is the greatest consolation in the sufferings of life and death. Indians, keep to it !'

"By the publication of a pamphlet entitled 'The Philosophy of the Vedanta,' he has helped to disseminate the Indian Wisdom. In the philosophy of Kant, he found a great help in understanding the Indian thinkers, as it contains a substratum of their own philosophy, the Advaita Vedanta. He has given scientific proofs of this in his book, 'Elemente der Metaphysik', now translated into English.

"References were made to the conspicuous service rendered to Indian philosophy by Professor Max Muller; the arduous task he undertook, and so successfully performed. In fact, Vedanta has had a re-birth from the knowledge comprised in the grand archives of the distant past, and is to-day becoming more widely known than ever before, finding acceptance of many conscientious, reasoning minds of the Western world. The practical application of its tenets shows its adaptability to human needs, and is a most important field for direct

Koviloor Digital Library

demonstration of the value of principles, leading upwards and onwards to higher spiritual developments.

"It seems, the Professor added, that a movement is being made back towards the fountainhead of spirituality, a movement that will in the future, probably make India, the spiritual leader of the nations, the highest and greatest spiritual influence on earth.

"The Swami interested himself in some translations Dr. Deussen was making, and a discussion arose on the precise signification and correct understanding of various obscure passages. The former pointed out that clearness of definition was of primary, and elegance of diction of very secondary importance. The vigorous and lucid interpretations given by the Oriental exegetist with such firmness of conviction, and yet such delicacy of perception, eventually quite won over the German savant. On two occasions, we prepared to take leave, but to this our kind host and hostess strongly objected, insisting that we must remain to dinner, and later on, join in a festivity to be held in honour of their daughter's fourth birthday. We could not but accept their warm-hearted and generous hospitality, and it was very charming to watch the little Erica, amongst much chat and merriment, dispensing tea and cakes to her youthful guests. Dr. and Mrs. Deussen were unfailing in their entertainment of us, and we were favoured with a fascinating and animated account of their tour in India. Especially, they enjoyed old India, so rich in its historical associations. They discoursed on the Great Mother Ganges reverenced by all, and in whose sacred waters, thousands of people take their daily bath: on the motley crowds that surge all day long in the large cities situated on her banks, where hundreds of temples, shrines and mosques testify to the ancient civilisation and the old-world religions of Brahma, Buddha, and Mahommed; and where the children of the Orient look out upon the world with eyes that regard things in a totally different light to those of the Occidental races. We realised how thoroughly the Professor and his wife appreciated the fine sympathies and instincts so indissolubly connected with our ideas of thing Indian. For cities are like human beings, with souls and temperaments of their own, and the soul of a city will reveal itself only to him who loves with a far-sighted emotion. In the bazaars they noted the old arts and crafts of Hindusthan still being plied, as they have been handed down from generation to generation. In the open street, they saw the barber shaving his clients and the worshipper praying with folded hands without fear or shame before his fellow-men. But there is a terrible poverty in India, of which the beggars who await you at every temple and street corner are but too genuine a sign. One of the first gestures learnt by the children of the poor, is to hold out their hands for alms.

"These and much more they told us, and of the never-to-be-forgotten

Koviloor Digital Library

kindness of the Indians towards their German visitors. However, the happiest day must come to an end, and it now only remains for me to close this trifling sketch, expressing the delight we experienced in seeing a philosopher happily surrounded by a peaceful home with wife and child, honour and contentment, as well as many congenial friends. The friendship so well begun was further cemented by the companionship of our host on our return to England. The journey was enlivened by much brilliant conversation on the part of our philosophers, accompanied by kindly attentions, which never ceased whilst we were together."

The Swami himself contributed to the *Brahmavadin* an article incidental to his meeting with Dr. Deussen, giving a sketch of the methods of the old and the new schools of Sanskrit scholars in Europe and contrasting them with the Indian. Speaking therein of Dr. Paul Deussen and Professor Max Muller he writes :—

"More than a decade has passed since a young German student, one of eight children of a not very well-to-do clergyman, heard on a certain day Professor Lassen lecturing on a language and literature new—very new even at that time—to European scholars, namely, Sanskrit. * * *

"Lassen was almost the last of that heroic band of German scholars, the pioneers of Sanskrit scholarship in Germany. Heroic certainly they were,—what interest except their pure and unselfish love of knowledge could German scholars have had at that time in Indian literature. The veteran Professor was expounding a chapter of Sakuntala; and on that day there was no one present more eagerly and attentively listening to Lassen's expositions than our young student. The subject-matter of the exposition was of course interesting and wonderful, but more wonderful was that strange language, the strange sounds of which, although uttered with all those difficult peculiarities that Sanskrit consonants are subjected to in the mouths of unaccustomed Europeans, had strange fascination for him. He returned to his lodgings, but that night sleep could not make him oblivious of what he had heard. A glimpse of a hitherto unknown land had been given to him, a land far more gorgeous in its colours than any he had yet seen; and having a power of fascination never yet experienced by his young and ardent soul.

"Naturally his friends were anxiously looking forward to the ripening of his brilliant parts, and expected that he would soon enter a learned profession which might bring him respect, fame, and, above all, a good salary and a high position. But then there was this Sanskrit ! The vast majority of European scholars had not even heard of it then; as for making it pay,—I have already said that such a thing is impossible even now. Yet his desire to learn it was strong. * * *

Koviloor Digital Library

"Yes, the desire to learn Sanskrit was strong in the heart of this German Student. It was long, up-hill work—this learning of Sanskrit; with him too it was the same world-old story of successful scholars and their hard work, their privations and their indomitable energy,—and also the same glorious conclusion of a really heroic achievement. He thus achieved success; and now—not only Europe but all India knows this man, Paul Deussen, who is the Professor of Philosophy in the University of Kiel. I have seen Professors of Sanskrit in America and in Europe. Some of them are very sympathetic towards Vedantic thought. I admire their intellectual acumen and their lives of unselfish labour. But Paul Deussen—or, as he prefers to be called in Sanskrit, *Deva-Sena*—and the veteran Max Müller, have impressed me as being the truest friends of India and Indian thought. It will always be among the most pleasing episodes in my life—my first visit to this ardent Vedantist at Kiel, his gentle wife who travelled with him in India, and his little daughter, the darling of his heart,—and our travelling together through Germany and Holland to London, and the pleasant meetings we had in and about London

"***There is now happily coming into existence in Europe, a new type of Sanskrit scholars, reverential, sympathetic, and learned,—reverential because they are a better stamp of men, and sympathetic because they are learned. And the link which connects the new portion of the chain with the old one, is, of course, our Max Müller. We Hindus, certainly owe more to him than to any other Sanskrit scholar in the West, and I am simply astonished when I think of the gigantic task which he, in his enthusiasm, undertook as a young man and brought to a successful conclusion in his old age. Think of this man without any help, poring over old manuscripts, hardly legible to the Hindus themselves, and in a language to acquire which takes a lifetime even in India,—without even the help of any needy Pandit whose 'brains could be picked', as the Americans say, for ten shillings a month, and a mere mention of his name in the introduction to some book of 'very new researches',—think of this man, spending days and sometimes months in elucidating the correct reading and the meaning of a word or a sentence in the commentary of Sâyana (as he has himself told me), and in the end succeeding in making an easy road through the forest of Vedic literature for all others to go along; think of him and his work, and then say what he really is to us! Of course we need not all agree with him in all that he says in his many writings; certainly such an agreement is impossible. But agreement or no agreement, the fact remains that this one man has done a thousand times more for the preservation, spreading, and appreciation of the literature of our forefathers than any of us can ever hope to do; and he has done it all with a heart which is full of the sweet balm of love and veneration.

Koviloor Digital Library

"If Max Müller is thus the old pioneer of the new movement Deussen is certainly one of its younger advance-guards. Philological interest had hidden long from view the germs of thought and spirituality to be found in the mine of our ancient Scriptures. Max Muller brought out a few of them and exhibited them to the public gaze, compelling attention to them by means of his authority as the foremost philologist. Deussen, unhampered by any philological leanings and possessing the training of a philosopher singularly well versed in the speculations of ancient Greece and modern Germany, took up the cue and plunged boldly into the metaphysical depths of the Upanishads, found them to be fully safe and satisfying, and then—equally boldly declared the fact before the whole world. Deussen is certainly the freest among scholars in the expression of his opinion about the Vedanta. He never stops to think about the 'What they would say' of the vast majority of scholars.....The greater is the glory therefore to Max Müller and to Deussen for their bold and open advocacy of truth !.....Just now we very much require the help of such genuine friends as these. * * *"

But to return to the narration of the day spent in Kiel. Sometime during the day, the Professor found Swamiji turning over the pages of a poetical work. He spoke to Swamiji wishing to draw him into conversation but failed, as he got no response from him. When Swamiji came to know of it afterwards, he apologised, saying that he was so absorbed in reading that he had not heard him. The Professor could not feel satisfied with this explanation until in the course of conversation Swamiji went on quoting verses from the book and interpreting them in places. Dr. Deussen was dumbfounded, and like the Maharajah of Khetri asked Swamiji how he could accomplish such a feat of memory. Thereupon the conversation turned upon the subject of the concentration of the mind practised by the Indian Yogi with so much perfection that, the Swami said from personal knowledge, in that state he would be unconscious even if a piece of burning charcoal were placed on his body. The Professor remarked that he could now easily believe that.

At this time, there was an Exhibition in Kiel, which Dr. Deussen insisted that the Swami must visit and offered to take him there. So immediately after tea, the Swami's party accompanied their host to the Exhibition and sometime was

Koviloor Digital Library

spent in studying the various arts and industries of Germany. Partaking of a light refreshment there the party returned to the hotel where Swamiji was staying. The Professor suggested that the Swami should see the objects of interest in and about the city, and it was decided that on the next day they would all make an excursion to some of the outlying districts, notably to the famous harbour of Kiel, opened only a few days previously by the Kaiser. It is needless to tell that the Swami and his companions enjoyed the day of sight-seeing immensely and appreciated the uniform hospitality and kindness of their hosts.

About six weeks had now been spent in holiday touring and the Swami felt that he could now take up his London work with renewed vigour. Accordingly, he asked Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to make plans for returning thither immediately. Dr. Deussen had hoped that the Swami would prolong his visit so that he would have opportunities to discuss many philosophical matters with him in the quiet retreat of his own residence, where his treasure-room of learning and of books would have added much to the interest of their discussions. He therefore tried to induce the Swami to stay there at least for a few days more. But when the latter told him that he was anxious to put his work on a solid basis before returning to India which he intended to do soon, the Professor understood and said, "Well, then, Swami, I shall meet you in Hamburg, and thence, *via* Holland, we shall both journey to London, where I hope to spend many happy hours with you."

Leaving Kiel Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and their guest made Hamburg their next stopping-place, where they visited the famous Zoological Gardens.

Three days passed when Professor Deussen arrived, to the great pleasure of all concerned. His family had remained at Kiel, although Mrs. Deussen had hoped to accompany her husband and to meet the Swami again, for she was likewise greatly interested in Vedanta. She spoke English fluently and was thus privileged to come into immediate intellectual

Koviloor Digital Library

contact with the Swami. The party, with its additional member, now journeyed to Amsterdam, remaining in that historic city for three days, during which time they visited the art galleries, the museums, and other places of interest. The Swami was specially delighted with the strange appearance of the cities of Holland with their canals for streets.

The travellers had a most unpleasant voyage, which fortunately was soon over and the Swami was again on English shores. Having reached London, Professor Deussen made his home with friends in St. John's Wood, while the Swami accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to their home in Hampstead, both places being suburbs of London.

Reflecting over his experiences on the Continent, the Swami expressed himself as highly gratified. He was always the student and a keen observer, and on this tour his eyes were opened to many new facts in European culture. He was much improved in health and felt that he could now face the demands upon his time and personality with renewed energy and with a new spirit.

Koviloor Digital Library

XCII

THE LAST DAYS' IN LONDON.

Having initiated the Swami Saradananda by personal example and instructions into the manner and matter of the preaching work that he would be called upon to take up, Swamiji at the repeated requests of his disciples and students of Vedanta in America, had sen thim to New York,at the end of June, in the company of Mr. J. J. Goodwin. The sweet and gentle personality of the new teacher and his masterly exposition of Hinduism, at once drew to him large numbers of men and women in America, "who were attracted to the Vedanta by the other Swami's eloquence and example,but who had not had sufficient opportunity for personal contact to become, what one would call, *established* in it." Soon after his arrival he was invited to be one of the teachers in the Greenacre Conperence of Comparative Religions, where he began his work with a lecture on Vedanta,and with his classes on the Yoga Systems, under the large Pine tree known as the "Swami's Pine", since it served as the canopy and open pulpit for the Swami Vivekananda when he taught his classes there two years ago. At the close of the session of the Conference, the Swami Saradananda was invited to lecture in Brooklyn, New york and Boston. During his tour on the Continent, Swamiji was delighted with the news of his brother-disciple's immediate success and constantly growing influence, and to hear, from private letters, that the expectations of his students were fully satisfied concerning their new teacher.

With the exception of a few days spent with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in Hampstead, the Swami commenced his work by giving two drawing-room lectures within the first two weeks at Airlie Lodge, Ridgway-gardens, the residence of Miss Muller at Wimbledon. On the first occasion Mr. J. F. Schwam presided and the room was crowded, the majority

Koviloor Digital Library

of attendants being society ladies. The Swami spoke on "Vedanta as a Factor in Civilisation," contrasting the science of Europe with the philosophy of India and showing that the former pointed, as it were, to a material unity of things, seeking for purely material causes in the solution of great problems of life, while the latter turned soul-wards, finding the great underlying unity to be spiritual. Through the Chairman the audience cordially thanked the Swami for the intellectual pleasure he had afforded them by his brilliant exposition of the Vedanta. Classes were arranged immediately, in which the Swami gave both private and general instruction, teaching many the principles of Râja Yoga and the practices of meditation.

His public lectures in England were mostly devoted to the exposition of the philosophical portions of the Vedanta, known as Jnâna Yoga. During this time he seemed to be the very spirit of Jnâna Yoga incarnate. In order to grant the general public an opportunity of hearing the Swami, Mr. E. T. Sturdy had engaged a large room at 39, Victoria Street with ample accommodation. Close by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had taken a flat, at 14, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, for the Swami and his Gurubhai, the Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India. He had come at the urgent call of Swamiji to help him in his London work, and when the former met him there was happiness for both. The Swami did all in his power to educate the newcomer in the responsibilities of his new life. Day after day he trained him so that he would be able to carry on the work successfully following upon his own departure for India. For he had already thought of sailing for India at the end of the year and was therefore anxious to leave behind a worker, fitted both spiritually and intellectually for the responsible position of a preacher of the Vedanta in London.

At this time he was writing also to his Indian disciples giving them instructions on various subjects and informing them of the progress of his London work, which was growing

Koviloor Digital Library

apace and the classes were becoming bigger as they went on. He was hopeful and enthusiastic, stating that with twenty earnest-minded and capable preachers of Vedanta he could convert the West in as many years. He realised the vast importance of his work so far as its influence on the Indian public was concerned, for he wrote, "One blow struck outside of India is equal to a hundred thousand struck within."

Professor Deussen often visited the Swami, discussing with him the principles of the Vedanta and gaining from him a much clearer insight into the whole body of Vedanta statement. He was in thorough agreement with the Swami when the latter pointed out to him the difficulties that lay in the way of a thorough understanding of the Vedanta metaphysics by Western minds, the trouble resting in the fact that the Western philosopher was apt to regard Indian idealism through the lens of Western intellectual prepossessions. And as he came to know the Swami more intimately, he understood that one must become de-Occidentalised, as it were, in order to master the spirit of the Hindu philosophical systems, for these were not so much systems of logic as methods in the spiritual vision. For two whole weeks, during his stay in London, the Professor was with the Swami, either by day or by night. At the same time Professor Max Müller of Oxford was in communication with the Swami. Thus three great minds were conversing with each other, two of the most famous Orientalists of the West and the Swami who, with right, has been considered the foremost Oriental teacher of his time.

It requires a generalising imagination to follow the Swami. Moving among the celebrities of his time, with his ideas and his work reaching to various quarters of the world, his mind a luminous light and his soul a flame of aspiration, the constantly increasing group of his disciples, the great intellectual stir he made in England,—to grasp all this requires much carefulness of thought and energetic study.

From Switzerland the Swami had written to an Indian disciple, "...There is a big London work waiting

Koviloor Digital Library

for me next month," and so it proved to be. As soon as it was known that he had returned to London, he was besieged by those who had heard him before, and they pressed him to open regular classes and give weekly lectures, which he did on the 8th. of October. The most notable feature of his work during the months of October and November, was his delivery of the message of the Vedanta both in its most practical and highest metaphysical aspects. What carried away his hearers, above all other things, was the living realisation with which he coloured each single statement. It seemed as if he was giving away the best fruits gained by his life of communion with the Highest Self in the peace and solitude of the Alps. He opened his lecture course with a masterly exposition of that most abstruse Hindu theory of Mâyâ, to define which has not only confounded the best Sanskrit scholars of the West but puzzled even the ancient philosophers of his own land. In fact, the burden of all his subsequent lectures in London was the rendering of the idea of Mâyâ into a modern language. How successfully he has achieved this task of the greatest difficulty will be apprehended by everyone who carefully studies his lectures on "Mâyâ and Illusion," "Mâyâ and the Evolution of the Conception of God", "Mâyâ and Freedom", "The Absolute and Manifestation." In his other lectures delivered during the period which followed, such as in "God in Everything", "Realisation," "Unity in Diversity," "The Freedom of the Soul," as also in the last series of four lectures known as "The Practical Vedanta", one sees the Swami full of that one luminous thought of the Advaita, that there is but One Infinite Existence, the *Sat-Chit-Anandam*,—the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute —and That is the innermost nature of man ; and, as such, the soul of man is, in essence, eternally free and divine, all manifestations being but the varying expressions of this nature of the Soul. No better exposition of a rationalistic religion,—upon which, the Swami believed, depended the salvation of Europe,—could be conceived than these unique presentments

Koviloor Digital Library

of the Highest Truth by him. Extraordinarily gifted as he was to garb the highest metaphysical truths in a poetic language of wonderful depth and profundity, he made the dizzy heights of Advaita appear like a land rich with the verdure of noblest human aspiration and fragrant with the flowers of finest emotions. His revelation of the glory and the majesty of the soul, his exaltation of renunciation, his exhortation for the life of burning self-less love, his reiteration of the Divine nature of man, his call for a practical test of the highest truths of the Vedanta, made him stand out as the apostle of a new Spiritual Reformation. The unspeakable power of his personality behind his utterances, made every word tell like a thunderbolt upon his audience. In one of his lectures on Mâyâ he rose to such heights of feeling that his whole audience were transported out of themselves, so much so that they lost all sense of personality, as it were, being merged in the consciousness of the Highest for the time being. In such moments as these, his hearers admitted, a teacher can transmit his realisation even by a spoken word and make his pupils touch the borderlands of the Infinite. As was usual with the Swami, all these lectures were delivered on the spur of the moment, without the least preparation.

During the months of October and November the Swami also received numerous invitations to lecture in private drawing-rooms, in fashionable clubs and to select audiences in London and Oxford. He made a friend of Canon Wilberforce who had received him at his residence in Westminster with great cordiality and marked attention, and became a keen student of the Vedanta philosophy. Several times he spoke before the Sesame Club, some of whose members became the ardent followers of his teaching. Among many other celebrities with whom he came in contact were Mr. Frederick H. Myers, the well-known author of several psychological works, the Rev. John Page Hopps, the Nonconformist minister, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, the Positivist and peace advocate, Dr. Stanton Coit, the Rev. Charles Voysey, the Theistic leader, Mr. Edward Carpenter, the

Koviloor Digital Library

author of "Towards Democracy," and many other persons of culture and enlightenment. Not only many Nonconformist clergymen, but even high clericals of the Anglican Church, were deeply impressed with the principles of the Vedanta; and on several occasions the Swami himself went to churches where he listened to sermons, the ideas of which were characteristic of that advanced religious thought which he had propagated.

At this time the Swami was occupied with "writing something big on the Vedanta philosophy," as he said in a letter, and was "busy collecting passages from the various Vedas bearing on the Vedanta in its threefold aspect." (*Vide.* Vol. II., pages 426 & 427). Indeed, he was busy now more than he had ever been with various other matters demanding his time and attention. Besides numerous private interviews, many classes a week, and constant writing and public lecturing, he was planning for his work in India and giving instructions accordingly to his Indian disciples and Gurubhâis. Thus he was unable to fulfil his long-cherished desire of leaving a systematised statement of his philosophy in book-form before departing for India. It, however, was a matter for satisfaction to him to see that there was a great demand for his published lectures and class-lessons, especially for his "Râja Yoga", the first edition of which had been sold out by October, and that there were already standing orders for several hundreds when the second edition was in the press in November. But the idea of writing books on Hindu philosophy never left him, and even as late as January 1901 when he came to Mâyâvati, he said to his disciples that he was seriously thinking of retiring from the life of public preaching and devoting the rest of his days to writing books in a secluded spot,—and no other place he could think of, he said, was more suitable for this than Mâyâvati. Later, after returning to the monastery at Belur he began two works which he styled "India's Message to the World" and "The Message of Divine Wisdom," and prepared a Syllabus for each of them (See "Complete Works," pages 881 and 1203).

Koviloor Digital Library

Another syllabus for an intended work, evidently on the history and the gradual growth of civilisation in India, was also found among his papers, which is not yet published.

Before departing from America he had similarly felt a deep anxiety about leaving the work there without having trained competent teachers, who must be Sannyâsins, to continue the Vedanta movement there. To this must be attributed his act of making from amongst his American disciples several Sannyâsins in New York, who after his departure carried on his propaganda with great enthusiasm, winning new adherents to the cause.

With all this work, he found that his exertions were taxing him. He was growing more and more world-weary, though his heart ever hoped to work itself out for the regeneration of others. The old Paramahamsa spirit which feels any bondage of work—even that of doing good to others—as unbearable, possessed him at times and he would think of throwing it off and be merged in the Infinite Peace. Even as early as August the twenty-third he had written from Lucerne in Switzerland :—

"I have begun the work, let others work it out. To set the work going I had to defile myself by touching money and property for a time. Now I am sure my part of the work is done and I have no more interest in Vedanta or any philosophy in the world, or in the work itself. I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, this world. Even its religious utility is beginning to pall on me...These works and doing good and so forth, are just a little exercise to cleanse the mind. I have had enough of it....

"...I am no *Master* to any Sannyâsin in the world ; they may do whatever it suits them, and if I can help them—that is all my connection with them. I have given up the bondage of iron—the family tie. I am not to take up the gold chain of religious brotherhood. I am free, must always be free. So I wish everyone to be free,—free as the air....As for me, I am as good as retired. I have played my part in the world....."

But though the Swami felt and wrote in this fashion, the Will of the Lord was otherwise. He was, indeed, yet to perform a whole world of work in his own land in the re-statement and re-valuation of the Sanâtana Dharma, by means of which he was to rouse his countrymen to the sense

Koviloor Digital Library

of duty to their religion. As for India, the Swami had been writing from England, even as he did formerly from America, to the effect that his disciples must learn to stand on their own feet, and must be filled with his own enthusiasm and spread the new light all over India. And again from Switzerland he wrote, "...Do not be afraid. Great things are going to be done, my children. Take heart...In winter I am going back to India and will try to set things on their feet there...Work on, brave hearts, fail not,—no saying nay ; work on,—the Lord is behind the work. Mahâshakti is with you...." And in India the work was being pushed on by his disciples. The Brahmavâdin magazine was disseminating the Swami's ideas broadcast, and instilling into the hearts of the people those ideals of Hinduism which form its background as the necessary elements of progress,—a national union and a religious public spirit quickened by a true appreciation of the valuable spiritual heritage of their ancestors.

One of the events which satisfied the Swami immensely, was the success of the maiden speech of the Swami Abhedananda, whom he had designated to speak in his stead at a club in Bloomsbury Square, on the 27th. of October. The new monk gave an excellent address on the general character of the Vedanta teaching ; and it was noticed that he possessed spiritual fervour and possibilities of making a good speaker. A description of this occasion, which affords a beautiful glimpse of the Swami's personality and character, written by Mr. Eric Hammond reads :—

"At the club in Bloomsbury Square, which invites and gives receptions to preachers of different creeds and hears what they have to say, Swamiji appeared. His countenance lacked notably that expression of interrogation which is often inseparable from the faces of the clerics of the West ; an embodiment of calm, of sagacity, of assured attainment ; and certainty enwrapped him garment-wise. One had, in his presence, a sense that he *knew*. Of his smile one retains glad remembrance. It had in it a kindly radiance, a love deep and steadfast, a something so subtly exquisite that no word but ineffable can be found for it.

"On that occasion, as on various others, I had purposed to put some question to him, asking for the solution of some perplexing problem.

Koviloor Digital Library

There was no need. At once on seeing me, he supplied the solution unasked. Yes, he *knew*. My thought was transparent to him. One's soul seemed to lay bare before his vision.

"Some disappointment awaited those that had gathered that afternoon. It was announced that Swamiji did not intend to speak, and Swami Abhedananda would address them instead.

"An overwhelming joy was noticeable in the Swami in his scholar's success. Joy compelled him to put at least some of itself into words that rang with delight unalloyed. It was the joy of a spiritual father over the achievement of a well-beloved son, a successful and brilliant student. The Master was more than content to have effaced himself in order that his Brother's opportunity should be altogether unhindered. The whole impression had in it a glowing beauty quite indescribable. It was as though the Master thought and knew his thought to be true : Even if I perish out of this plane, my message will be sounded through these dear lips and the world will hear it.' As usual, some talk followed. Interested persons put questions, to which the Master replied with unfailing rapidity and lucidity, exhibiting an almost bewildering command of knowledge and resource. He remarked that this was the first appearance of his dear Brother and pupil, as an English-speaking lecturer before an English audience, and he pulsated with pure pleasure at the applause that followed the remark. His selflessness throughout the episode burnt itself into one's deepest memory.

"A little later, people were passing out of the house, the speaker, Abhedananda, with them, besieged by questions and by kindly praise and thanks. The Master, always mindful of courtesy, bounded like a boy down the staircase to remind him that he had omitted, in the press, to bid the hostess farewell."

At this time the Swami was also delighted to hear frequently of the Swami Saradananda's success in America chiefly through the newspaper cuttings sent to him. Following upon his teaching at the Greenacre Conference, the Swami Saradananda had gone to deliver lectures at Boston, Brooklyn and New York, and everywhere made many friends and won the love and esteem of earnest followers. He then settled down in New York to carry on the Vedanta movement in a regular and well-organised way. There was no doubt that he was making an impression among some of the best people in New York and its environs, as the reports of his work at this time testify.

Moreover, Miss Waldo whom Swamiji regarded as his

Koviloor Digital Library

ablest and best-prepared student, had at his express desire organised classes of her own and was conducting them with great credit. Among her other labours, during the absence of the Swami Saradananda in Cambridge for November and December, she conducted the classes in the Vedanta Society in New York.

That the interest in the Vedanta philosophy went on steadily increasing in America since the Swami left for England, and that he was remembered with endearing love and gratitude by his students, will be evidenced by the following letter written to the editor of the *Brahmavâdin* by Helen F. Huntington on 14th. October, 1896, from Gainesville, Georgia :—

"I am sure you will be glad to know that the peaceable fruits of Swami Vivekananda's teachings have been all the while increasing ; his influence is like sunshine—so quiet, so potent and far-reaching. It will always be a marvel to us that an Oriental could take such a firm hold on us Occidentals, trained as we have been by long habits of thought and education to opposing views...Our interest is not of the noisy effervescent quality often incited by passing fads ;—to-day it is stronger and deeper than ever before, and all of the Swami's followers endeavour earnestly to spread the truth according to the various opportunities afforded to them, —some quietly within domestic circles, others more prominently, as the case may be. And who is able to estimate the measure of man's silent influence? * * *

"Even down here, a thousand miles or more from the scene of the Swami's work, I hear mention of his name....I hope the time is not far distant when the Vedanta will be as well-known here as in New York City. * * *

"It is impossible not to wish for Swami Vivekananda's return to our midst, as he has endeared himself so deeply to all of us. As he said of his Guru, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, 'His presence was a blessing to everyone, saint and sinner,' so was his own life among us ; for he influenced us to better living and brotherly-kindness to all men. If there be found any among his so-called enemies who speak of him otherwise—and I may truthfully say that they are very few—we all feel sure the Swami will freely forgive them, realising that the wrong comes through error rather than through evil intent. * * *"

The Swami had great confidence that the work in America would not suffer by his absence in England. His friends and disciples corresponded with him regularly and he saw from

Koviloor Digital Library

the tone in which they addressed him that they were heart and soul in their enthusiasm to push on the movement.

During the month of October, 1896, the Swami's mind turned more and more towards India. He had been thinking for some time of returning thither and had spoken accordingly to some of his more intimate friends, notably to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. But there was nothing definite, his remarks being only of a passing character. He had written also in a tentative way to Mrs Bull concerning his intention to return to India. And in reply he received a letter, asking if he would be willing to accept a large sum of money with which to further his plans of work in India, especially with regard to the founding of a permanent home, as the head-quarters of the Brotherhood in Calcutta. The Swami replied, a week before his sailing for India, to the effect that he was profoundly grateful for the generous offer, but that he did not feel at the time that he should encumber himself with such responsibilities, as he wished to commence his work on a small scale in India, and that until he had found his bearings he could not accept her kindness. He promised, however, to write details from India.

It was after one of the class lectures towards the middle of November that the Swami called Mrs. Sevier aside and asked her quite suddenly to purchase four tickets immediately for the most convenient steamer from Naples, as he desired to shorten the sea-voyage by travelling to Naples *via* the Continent. It was a sort of surprise to her, even though she knew that the Swami intended sailing, and though she was accustomed to his sudden changes and outbursts of spontaneity. Both she and her husband, who were to accompany him to help in his work in India and lead the *Vânaprastha* life, accelerated their preparations. It was decided that they would visit some of the important cities in Italy *en route*. On the same day they secured berths on a new steamer of the North German Lloyd, which was to leave Naples for Ceylon on the sixteenth of December. Subsequently, however, their passages were transferred to the steamer "Prinz Regent Luitpold," as the new steamer could not sail on that day.

Koviloor Digital Library

The Swami at once wrote to his Madras followers informing them about it, stating casually that he wanted to establish two centres, one in Calcutta, the other in Madras, and that Mr. and Mrs. Sevier intended founding a Himalayan Centre. He added, "...We will begin work with these three centres ; and later on, we will get to Bombay and Allahabad. And from these points, if the Lord be pleased, we will invade not only India, but send bands of preachers to every country in the world..." His mind was big with plans, and he discussed them enthusiastically with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. He seemed to be consumed with an apostolic zeal of delivering his message to his motherland, and they in their turn, anticipated great results, and made up their minds to renounce the world and dedicate themselves to the furtherance of his mission and to the practical realisation of those of his teachings which they had made their own. So they made quick preparations to settle their domestic affairs, and in a short time had disposed of their belongings consisting, among other things, of ornaments, pictures, books and furniture. Like true disciples as they were, they handed over to their Guru the whole of the sale proceeds. They now took rooms elsewhere so as to be ready to start whensoever he wished. His devoted disciple, Mr. Goodwin, who had taken the vow of a Brahmachârin and served the Swami as his secretary and personal attendant, was also to accompany him. Moreover, Miss Müller with her lady-companion, Miss Bell, was preparing to follow him at a later date. In his plans of work in India the Swami, as a true patriot, did not leave out the thought of helping the women of his own land. Simultaneously with his idea of founding the three monastic centres for the training of young men as preachers, he had thought of starting an institution for educating girls on national lines, so that out of them will come out not only ideal wives and mothers, but Brahmachârinis working for the improvement of their own sex. The Swami had inspired Miss Müller with the idea of being of service to the women of India, and she had gladly promised to support the proposed educational

Koviloor Digital Library

institution for Hindu girls. He had also in mind to bring Miss Margaret Noble to India in due time in order to put her in charge of his intended work for women. Thus from all points of view the prospects of launching a successful campaign in India seemed bright with a glorious promise, and Swamiji was transported with joy at seeing that the dearest dream of his life was going to be fulfilled at last—the rejuvenation of his motherland.

Gradually it became known to his English students that the Swami was to leave in the middle of December. The news caused much sadness among them. It was decided to hold a farewell reception in his honour. The chief organiser of this final meeting was that indefatigable worker, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, than whom the Swami had few better friends. It was he and Mr. Goodwin who drew up the farewell address and sent invitations to all of the Swami's friends and followers.

On December the thirteenth, that final Sunday before the Swami's departure from London, the gathering at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, in Piccadilly, where the meeting was held, was enormous. Scores of people from all parts of the city, and some even from the distant suburbs poured into the hall, until there was hardly standing-room. The Swami Abhedananda was there. He had now made a place for himself in the huge metropolis, and it was to him that the gathering unconsciously turned for solace on this day of loss. The Master's heart was full when he entered the hall amidst a stillness which spoke eloquently of the deep relationship he had made between himself and his London followers. Mr. Eric Hammond eloquently describes this farewell gathering in the following words :—

"It was Sunday in London, when shops were shut, business at a standstill, and the city streets silenced for a while from some at least of the rattle and the rumble of their heavier traffic. Londoners wore their Sunday clothing, their Sunday bearing and manner, and grey, subdued, and semi-silent folk wended their way to church and chapel. This afternoon the friends of Swamiji were to say 'Good-bye' to him whose coming had meant so much to them. In the hall of meeting, dedicated

Koviloor Digital Library

to the use of the artists, paintings hung upon the walls ; palms, flowers and ferns decorated the platform from which Swamiji would utter his final speech in England's great metropolis to the British people. All sorts and conditions of men were there, but all alike were filled by one desire : to see him, to hear him, even if may be, to touch his garment once again.

"On the platform musicians and singers at stated intervals 'discoursed sweet sounds.' Speeches illustrating the esteem and affection which Swamiji had won, were made by men and by women. Salvos of applause punctuated and followed them. Many were silent, tongue-tied and sad at heart. Tears were very near to some eyes. Grey and gloom without were intensified and deepened by grey and gloom within. One form, one figure, fought and triumphed over sorrow ; arrayed in garments, glistening as of amber, Swamiji passed among the people, like a living shaft of sunshine.

" 'Yes, Yes,' he said, 'we shall meet again ; we *shall*."

The Chairman of the meeting, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, was requested to present the following address to the Swami, on the motion of Mr. H. B. M. Buchanan, B. A., seconded by Mrs. G. C. Ashton Jonson, and unanimously supported :—

"The Students of the Vedanta Philosophy in London under your remarkably able instruction feel that they would be lacking in their duty and privilege if they failed to record their warm and heartfelt appreciation of the noble and unselfish work you have set yourself to do, and the great help you have been to them in their study of Religion.

"We feel the very deepest regret that you are so soon to leave England, but we should not be true students of the very beautiful philosophy you have taught us to regard so highly if we did not recognise that there are claims upon your work from our brothers and sisters in India. That you may prosper very greatly in that work is the united prayer of all who have come under the elevating influence of your teaching, and no less of your personal attributes, which, as a living example of the Vedanta, we recognise as the most helpful encouragement to us one and all to become real lovers of God, in practice as well as in theory.

"We look forward with great interest and keen anticipation to your speedy return to this country, but, at the same time, we feel real pleasure that India, which you have taught us to regard in an altogether new light, and, we should like to add, to love, is to share with us the generous service which you are giving to the world.

"In conclusion we would specially beg of you to convey our loving sympathy to the Indian People and to accept from us our assurance that we regard their cause as ours, realising as we do from you that we are all One in God."

Koviloor Digital Library

The Swami was much moved and replied in terms of great endearment and glowing spiritual fervour. He pointed out the fact that history repeats itself and that Christianity had been rendered possible only by the Roman peace. "He perhaps meant" comments the Sister Nivedita, "that there would yet be seen a great army of Indian preachers in the West, reaping the harvest he had sown so well, and making ready in their turn new harvests, for the distant reaping of the future." He assured them that he was always to be with them, it may not be physically, but in that region of the spiritual consciousness, into which his hearers, through his eloquence and months of teaching, had been gathered and in which no separation could be known. And over and above all his public utterances at the time of his departure, rings out that triumphant statement which he made to Mr. Hammond just before his leaving London, a statement which only a Prophet of God, a Buddha, can make,—"I may even find it good to get out of this body, to throw it off like a disused garment. But I shall never cease preaching and helping mankind until all shall come to know the Highest Truth." It is remarkable how, here and there, ever since his death, persons who had never seen him in his lifetime, are now feeling his spiritualising influence by communing with him through the great utterances he has left behind. True, he visited London again, but not in the capacity of a public teacher, as at that time other fields were calling him, the United States of America. And there was yet work to be done in India. Then, too, if he had known that there were but three more years for him of mortal life,—aye, even less than three.

The Swami's last lecture in London on the "Advaita Vedanta" was the fitting culmination of the whole series, as it speaks the final word on the highest stage of Realisation, and as, with few exceptions, the general character of his teaching in England had been that of the path of Jnâna-Yoga. Reporting this lecture, but particularly making a survey of the influence created by the Swami, a distinguished corres-

Koviloor Digital Library

pondent to the "Indian Mirror" writes as follows on the 14th of December from London :—

"The last lecture on the Advaita philosophy was given by the Swami Vivekananda to a crowded audience, which was anxious not to lose this last opportunity of hearing him for sometime to come, on December 10, 1896. The regularity with which these thoughtful people have attended the Swami's lectures in London, is an indication of the serious attention which they have given to the whole of the present Vedanta exposition—an exposition which, in the hands of a personality, which many have learned to very deeply respect, and others to love, finds an application to every phase of Western life, as well as to that of Eastern life, where its first presentment was made. It is this liberal and wise interpretation, which has brought people of many varying shades of opinion, including several of the clergy of the Church of England, and thus to group themselves together in an effort to make the Swami's teachings as widely known as possible...

"A deep spiritual teaching is not likely to move rapidly at first, but steadily the Eastern thought is being more and more understood through an army of conscientious and industrious translators, and a teacher like the Swami Vivekananda comes and gives a living force to this lore, wrapped up in books, and also adjusts discrepancies. Yet, notwithstanding all that has been done by various scholars, the majority, probably, of those people who certainly may be called refined and educated, who have attended the Swami's lectures, have now had their attention called for the first time to the great treasures of Universal Thought and Wisdom, which India holds through the ages in trust, as it were, for the world. What a vast change would be produced if these Western people, made the rulers of India by the changes that time brings about, were to understand and sympathise with the best living thought of India...If the Swami Vivekananda's work may be called a missionary effort, it may be contrasted with most of the other missionary efforts of the day by its not having produced any bitterness, by its not having given rise to a single instance of ill-feeling or sectarianism. The reason of this is simple, and great is its strength. The Swami is not a sectarian ; he is the promoter of Religion, not of one religion only. The exponents of single points in the vast field of religion can find nothing in him to fight.

"...Amongst those who attended the farewell reception were several old officers and civilians who have spent years of their life in India, and who cannot be presumed to be carried away by an enthusiasm for a particular exponent, a philosophy or a people of whom they know nothing."

Touching upon the same subject, Mr. Sturdy wrote after Swamiji's departure from London for India :—

Koviloor Digital Library

"Indications are not wanting that the Vedanta philosophy, under many new names and in various ways, is gradually permeating the thought of the West, and it would be difficult often to find any points of difference, except in terminology, between what is directly taught under the name of Vedanta by Swami Vivekananda and others who have been co-operating with him, and the teachings of some of our most prominent philosophers, inside and outside of the various churches...."

Many people after hearing the Swami in London declared that, the manner and matter of his exposition of the Vedanta philosophy have revealed to them an entirely new and encouraging view of life in regard to their relationship towards the world at large, and also to that eternal substratum which lies behind it. Thus writes Miss. M. E. Noble who afterwards became known as the Sister Nivedita:—

"To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us have been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality, in our faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light'....

"We have not all shared that spirit of doubt and negation which is certainly the characteristic thought-mood of cultured Europe to-day. Many gentle souls are able to adapt the religious instruction of childhood to their own mental growth, and these, without any anguished sense of rupture from truth's associations, gain a generous outlook and a readiness to get truth from whatever quarter of the horizon it may hail.

"...It was the Swami's '*I am God*' that came as something always known, only never said before....Yet again, it was the Unity of Man that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage and we know it...."

Speaking of the secret of the Swami's "roaring success" in England and America Mr. J. J. Goodwin writes:—

"The readiness of so many men and women in the West to accept the teachings of the Swami Vivekananda was due more to the Swami's practical side than even to his unique eloquence and the grandeur of the philosophy he propounded. They found in him the living example of

Koviloor Digital Library

his own theories, and were ready to follow him because they believed that a philosophy which had produced such an one, could, if they followed his example, do much also for them."

Mr.Bepin Chandra Pal, a celebrated Indian publicist,- speaking of the impression which the Swami Vivekananda left in England, wrote from London to "The Indian Mirror" of 15th February, 1898 :—

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from 'The Dead Pulpit' by Mr. Haweis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

"Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way. *** She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you ?' * * * She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you were coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, 'Look, there is the Swami Vivekananda'. As I had to catch the train in a hurry I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and was compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda, even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at this agreeable incident, and thanked my *gerrua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides this incident. I have seen here many educated English gentlemen who have come to revere India and who listen eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India."

During his stay in England, both before and after his visit to the Continent, the Swami himself was joyous in his outlook

Koviloor Digital Library

on his English labours. To one of his very closest American friends he wrote almost in a mood of prophecy concerning the future character and success of his mission, saying that he believed in the power of the English to assimilate great ideas. Though the assimilating process might perhaps be slow, it would be none the less sure and abiding. He often spoke of the eventual hold the Vedanta would possess in England itself and believed that the time would come when distinguished ecclesiastics of the Church of England, imbued with the truth and the idealism of the Vedanta would form a liberal community within the Anglican Church itself, supporting the universality of religion, both in vision and in practice.

Himself referring to his work in England, in his famous "Reply to the Address of Welcome in Calcutta," the Swami says :—

"My work in England has been more satisfactory to me than my work in America. The bold, brave and steady Englishman,...if he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out ; and the immense practicality and energy of the race makes it sprout and immediately bear fruit. It is not so in any other country. That immense practicality, that immense vitality of the race you do not see anywhere else. There is less of imagination, but more of work ; and who knows the well-spring, the mainspring of the English heart ! How much of imagination and feeling is there ! They are a nation of heroes ; they are the true Kshattriyas ; their education is to hide their feelings and never to show them. From their childhood they have been educated up to that....But with all this heroic superstructure, behind this covering of the fighter, there is a deep spring of feeling in the English heart. If you once know how to reach it, if you get there, if you have personal contact and mix with him, he will open his heart, he is your friend for ever, he is your servant. Therefore in my opinion, my work in England has been more satisfactory than anywhere else...."

That the Swami's ideas about the English people were revolutionised, he wrote to his friends and disciples in his private letters from England before he publicly acknowledged it in the course of his above lecture. A few quotations from them about his estimate of the English character will be interesting here. On the 8th of October, 1896, he wrote to an American lady-disciple :—

Koviloor Digital Library

"• • • You know of course, the steadiness of the English, and they are the least jealous of each other of all the other races, and that is why they dominate the world. They have solved the secret of obedience without slavish cringing, great freedom with great law-abidingness."

Again, before his departure for India, he wrote to a group of lady-disciples in America :—

"The work in London has been a roaring success. The English are not so bright as the Americans, but once you touch their heart, it is yours for ever. Slowly have I won success, and is it not remarkable that by six months' work altogether I should have a steady class of about one hundred and twenty persons apart from public lectures? Here everyone means work—the practical Englishman. Captain and Mrs. Sevier and Mr. Goodwin are going to India with me to work and spend their own money on it! There are scores here ready to do the same,—men and women of position, beautiful young girls ready to give up everything for the idea once they feel convinced! And last, though not the least, the help in the shape of money to start my *'work'* in India has come and more will follow. My ideas about the English have been revolutionised. I now understand why the Lord has blessed them above all other races. They are steady, sincere to the backbone, with great depths of feeling,—only with a crust of stoicism on the surface,—if that is broken you have your man...."

In his Calcutta lecture the Swami makes a bold confession and declares :—

"***No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English, and on this platform are present English friends who can bear witness to the fact; but the more I lived among them, and saw how the machine was working,—the English national life,—and mixed with them, I found where the heart-beat of the nation was, and the more I loved them. There is none among you here present, my brothers, who lovesthe English people more than I do now..."

Certainly there was not a greater force which has ever acted to produce a sympathetic relation and co-operation between the Eastern and Western worlds than that which the Swami wielded himself and through his Gurubhais and his disciples.

On the 16th of December the Swami and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier left London for the Continent, Mr. Goodwin sailing from Southampton to meet them at Naples. Several intimate friends were at the London station at the time of leaving, to see them off. As they bade him farewell they saw that on the

Koviloor Digital Library

Swami's face shone the peace of a supreme benediction. Though everyone present felt the thought of separation keenly, they consoled themselves with the idea that the Guru is ever present in the hearts of the disciples, irrespective of distance or of time. Truly did Mr. E. T. Sturdy voice the feelings of many of his fellow-disciples when he penned the following lines in a private letter to one of them in America :—

"Swami Vivekananda left to-day...He had a magnificent reception in the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours There were about five hundred people there, and a good many friends were away from London. His influence has sunk very deep into many hearts. We are going straight ahead with his work. His brother-Swami, a nice, attractive, ascetic-minded young man will help me in this. * * *

"Your presumption is correct. I am heavy-hearted to-day at the loss of the noblest friend and the purest teacher I have met in this incarnation. I must have stored some exceptional merit in the past to receive such a blessing now. What I longed for all my life I have found in the Swami."

Before closing with the narrative of the Swami's life in England, an incident which shows how he could retain his coolness in the face of danger, must be mentioned. As he was once walking with Miss Müller and an English friend across some fields, a mad bull came tearing along, making its way towards them. In the words of the Sister Nivedita :—

"The Englishman frankly ran, and reached the other side of the hill in safety. The woman ran as far as she could, and then sank to the ground, incapable of further effort. Seeing this, and unable to aid her, the Swami,—thinking 'So *this* is the end, after all'—took up his stand in front of her, with folded arms. He told afterwards how his mind was occupied with a mathematical calculation, as to how far the bull would be able to throw. But the animal suddenly stopped, a few paces off, and then, raising his head, retreated sullenly.

"A like courage—though he himself was far from thinking of these incidents—had shown itself, in his early youth, when he quietly stepped up to a runaway horse, and caught it, in the streets of Calcutta, thus saving the life of the woman, who occupied the carriage behind."

Koviloor Digital Library

XCIII.

TOWARDS INDIA.

Now London was left behind. It was as if a great care had suddenly dropped off from the Swami's shoulders. He knew that the work would go on well, as the Swami Abhedananda was in every way capacitated for the arduous and responsible task. Besides, he had confidence, above all other things, in the Will of the Lord. He knew that he was but an instrument, and that everything depended on the Most High.

The Swami rejoiced that he was free again. He said to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, "Now I have but one thought, and that is India. I am looking forwards to India—to India !" On the eve of his departure an English friend had asked of him, "Swami, how do you like now your motherland after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West ?" His significant reply was, "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the *Tirtha !*"

Both Mr. and Mrs. Sevier noticed that the Swami was far from well and were therefore glad that he was free from care, and especially that he was in his "boyish mood". He was more actually overdone than he himself knew. He was very tired of things in general ; and so whenever his companions found him "almost like a child in his joy," they felt that perhaps he would once more rebound and be able to manifest again the very highest powers of his personality.

The party travelled directly to Milan, *Via* Dover, Calais and Mont Cenis. The Swami who was in his happiest mood, made the long hours pass rapidly, and the journey, a delight. His mind was full of plans for his country, and of

Koviloor Digital Library

thoughts of the crowded hours of public life he would probably have on reaching there. Railroad travelling generally fatigued him, but on this occasion he seemed to enjoy it. He was like a boy, pleased with everything, and keenly observing the varied scenes through which he passed. His companions entered heartily into his enthusiastic moods and plans of work, for they too were eagerly looking forward with anticipations to their Indian experience. They entertained high hopes of what they should do in India in helping the Swami to establish the proposed Himalayan Ashrama. Times were when he would narrate stories of Indian folklore to his companions, until they built, in imagination, a whole Indian world, peopling it with the fancies and the realities with which the Swami enriched his conversation.

Through France, across the Alps, the train travelled on. As it approached the city of Milan the Swami recalled the Italian historic experience. Yes, he was now in Italy, that great theatre of action which he had inhabited, in his mind, in those days of early life when he had mastered the history of the Roman Empire.

As their destination was Milan, the Swami and his companions alighted there and took up their quarters at a hotel approximate to the cathedral in order to visit frequently this celebrated edifice, which the Swami greatly admired. He was also much impressed with that masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci, "The Last Supper." Altogether the Swami enjoyed Milan, and its famous snow-view in the distance. This was his first experience of an Italian city. Leaving Milan, the party next visited the city of Pisa, famous for its Leaning Tower, its cathedral, the Campo Santo and its baptistery. The Swami considered his ascent up the Tower a pleasant expedition, the ascent being so easily made that even a horse can accomplish the feat. From the dome of the cathedral one gains a splendid view of the distant Appenines. Both in Milan and in Pisa the Swami admired the rich marble work, which in Pisa, in particular, is both of black and white, in these fine buildings. From Pisa to

Koviloor Digital Library

Florence ! The very name of Florence excites reverence and joy to all lovers of art. Its beautiful situation on the Arno, surrounded by picturesque hills makes of Florence a beautiful city, naturally ; besides, there are so many objects and places of historic interest. The covered, bazaar-like bridge over the Arno, the Ponte Vecchio, pleases the eye. The Swami enjoyed it all. The art galleries were visited, drives were taken in the parks, the history of Savonarola was narrated, and the three travellers entered truly into the spirit of this city.

In Florence the Swami had a pleasant experience. As he was driving in the Park he met Mr. and Mrs. Hale of Chicago, whom the reader will recall as the Swami's intimate friends and hosts in America, whose residence he made his home for some time. They were touring in Italy and knew nothing of his presence in the city. Thus it was for the three a most agreeable surprise. The Swami spent some hours in lively reminiscences and discussed with them the plans of his life and work in India.

As the train left Florence for Rome the Swami was full of emotions, for if he ever desired to visit any city in Europe it was Rome. From the days of his college-life in which he became acquainted with the events and the personalities of Roman history, he had lived in imagination there. Rome, to his mind, like Delhi, was one of the ancient centres of the world,—Delhi, the Eastern, Rome, the Western. Long before he arrived in Rome, he had been discussing with his companions the glories of the ancient Roman world, and before the minds of his hearers rose in all their historic splendour the glorious pageant of dead emperors. But there were other things besides the ruins of the city. There were the ecclesiastical, mediæval and modern Rome, and the Rome of art and letters. When the train drew into Rome there was none happier than he. One week was spent in this imperial city. Each day new places of interest were visited, the Swami at all times being, as it were, pre-occupied with his own moods. Prior to leaving London, Mrs. Sevier, by

Koviloor Digital Library

the kindness of Miss MacLeod, had received the address of a Miss Edwards, well-known in English circles in Rome. With her was staying Miss Alberta Sturgis, a niece of Miss MacLeod. Both these ladies became warm admirers of the Swami and his teaching, and joined him and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in several of their excursions in and about Rome. Miss Edwards was especially taken with the idealism of his philosophy and with his immense knowledge of Roman history and general human culture

The Roman Forum, the Appian Way, the Colosseum, the Palace of the Cæsars, the Church of S. John Lateran, S. Maria Maggiore, the Church of S. Pietro, the Barberini Palace, the Rospigliosi Palace, the Fontane di Trevi, the triumphal arches, the Castello Sant Angelo, the Museum of the Capitol, the Catacomb of St. Sebastian and two Columbariums, and above all, the Vatican and the St. Peter's Cathedral, proved of immense interest to the Swami. He resurrected in his imagination the inhabitants, the culture and the events of the great past. And those who were with him remarked, "This is wonderful, Swami ! You seem to know every stone in Rome !" And through his luminous historic consciousness they saw the whole meaning of Roman influence on our modern world. The Swami was especially interested in Christian Rome, with its churches, its basilicas, its catacombs, its ruins, its memories, its spirit, and, in Mediæval Rome, with its splendid palaces and relics of that period. He pondered over the wonderful organising genius and the missionary spirit of Christianity, as exhibited in Roman Catholicism ; and at St. Peter's, beneath its vast dome, before the shrines of the Apostles, he entered, in the silence of meditation, into that apostolic world in which the Apostle Paul preached and St. Peter inspired the followers of the Christ. He was impressed with the Christian liturgy, seeing therein a kinship with the religious ceremonials of his own land. One who stood near him at the time when he was studying the vast interior and the architectural glories of St. Peter's said, "Swami, what do you think of this grand ex-

Koviloor Digital Library

travagance, for such it is. Why such a great outlay of expense for ceremonial and for church splendours when millions are starving ?" The lady protested at the evident discrepancy between the religious spirit and such enormous pomp. The Swami at once replied, "What ! Can one offer too much to God ! Through all this pomp the people are brought to an understanding of the power of a character like Christ, Who, though Himself possessed of nothing has, by the supreme character of his personality, inspired to such an extent the artistic imagination of mankind. But we must always remember that external practices have value only as helps to develop internal purity. If they have ceased to express life, crush them out without mercy." But on Christmas Day when he attended the imposing ceremony of the High Mass at St. Peter's with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier he seemed, after a time, to be restless with emotions and whispered to them, "Why all this pageantry and ostentatious show is being enacted ! Can it be possible that the Church that practises such display, pomp and gorgeous ceremonial is really the follower of the lowly Jesus who had not where to lay his head ?". Indeed, he could not help drawing a contrast between these splendours of the outward religious form at St. Peter's, and the Vedantic spirit of Sannyâs with its great love of poverty and homelessness with a view to gain the realisation of the Impersonal Absolute. And he would not have been Vivekananda had he not preferred the grand poverty of the *gerrua* and the great freedom of the open road, to the gorgeous vestments of the Cardinals and the grandeur of all the Vatican itself.

In order to divert the Swami's mind from a too serious pre-occupation, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier arranged for many pleasant drives on those beautiful old highways which make Rome exquisitely delightful,—for oftentimes he grew tired even of history and rûins. The Pincian Hill, the Borghese Park, and the Appian Way were often resorted to. The climate and the spirit of the Eternal City are at their best in the winter season, and especially at Christmas time. The

Koviloor Digital Library

Christ-spirit filled the air, and the Swami was caught up into it; many times he spoke touchingly of the Christ-Child, contrasting the stories of His birth with that of the beautiful Indian Christ-Child, Sri Krishna.

Much must be left to the imagination of the reader if he would really enter into the world of the Swami's happiness in Rome. He must know much of Roman history, and much of Italian and Greek art, stored in the numerous museums there. He must make himself one with the ecclesiastical and eternal spirit of Rome itself. He must know the pleasures of Rome when it is perfect, in the winter time. He must see the grandeur of the ecclesiastic service and appreciate its solemnity. Then, too, he must know the Swami. He must go with him into those deeps of meditation, which were his, upon the greatness of humanity. He must tune himself also with his joyous spirit and emotional nature, for the Swami, though the thinker, was withal "a boy at heart", as his companions spoke of him. His own personality was as rich with interest as Rome itself. His reflections, his remarks, his moods, the light on his countenance, the serious, happy, or even impatient spirit in which the hour found him,—were all dear and instructive to his friends. He was always the leading fact and event in all their days of travel, even as he was with all who knew him. The solemnity of Rome, and the solemnity of his own personality mingled in a strange and glorious harmony in their minds. And in his comparisons between the Roman and the Indian world they had intellectual illumination as gratifying as the study of Rome's immortal works of art and beauty, with which their days were filled.

It will be interesting to give here the following excerpts, bearing on this memorable visit, from a delightful article, full of information about Rome and its various attractive sights seen by Swamiji, written by Mrs. Sevier in the pages of the Prabuddha Bharata :—

"Our visit to Rome with Swamiji was from first to last one of almost unalloyed pleasure. We were in the midst of friends who vied with each other in making our stay as pleasant as possible.

Koviloor Digital Library

"* * * Our interest was heightened by the companionship of the Swami who possessed such quick-witted observation and an apprehension of deep historic memories. * * *

"* * * First and foremost we wished to see some of the ruins, so we wended our way to the Palace of the Cæsars, and later in the day to the Forum. On the way thither, passing through the Piazza di Spagna, our attention was arrested by the fine staircase by which it is adorned, leading to the Church of S. Trinita de Monte, conspicuously seated on an eminence above it, and celebrated for its painting, The Descent from the Cross. * * *

"The Palantine Hill was reached in due course, where the remains of the wonderful palaces of the Cæsars lie stratum above stratum. * * *

"We next proceeded to the Forum, a place once adorned with most imposing buildings. It is now covered with numerous relics of its former majesty.....Swamiji closely examined Trajan's Pillar, the most beautiful column in Rome. It stands 117 ft. in height ; and the bas-reliefs with which it is ornamented, represent the exploits of Trajan, and contain over 2,000 human figures. The Triumphal Arch of Titus, which was erected in 81 A. D. to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem, is yet in good preservation. Swamiji was very quiet at first, but the more one watched him, the more convinced one became of the interest that lay behind the outward calm. He was thinking of the Rome of long ago that had mighty aspirations and embodied them in architectural efforts which were marvels for their size and beauty. Going from place to place, he began presently to speak, mingling with his observations on history and architecture a hundred details that threw a glamour round the ancient monuments, and his talk went flowing on as he traced the fortunes of the Imperial idea under the Roman Empire in the heyday of its power, when the world seemed to lie at its feet, conquered ; its rise and fall ; and how its decline commenced after the death of Augustus, when the people and their rulers were alike corrupt.

"Not to be overlooked was the Temple of Vesta, one of the oldest and most revered, in which were the sacred shield, and the sacred fire... which was always kept burning in it by the Vestal virgins, Her priestesses.

"The public baths in Rome were very numerous. Those belonging to the time of the Empire were spacious and grand structures, comprising not only places for bathing, but also places for sports and athletic games, halls, libraries, porticoes, etc. Some extensive remains of the baths of Titus and Caracalla may still be seen, and these we wandered among.

"Spectacular as all Rome is, there is nothing more striking in its ruined greatness than the Colosseum, the finest amphitheatre which Roman magnificence ever erected. It is said to have been built in one

Koviloor Digital Library

year by the compelling labour of 12,000 Jews and Christians. The building could accommodate 110,000 spectators, of whom 90,000 were seated. * * *

" * * * We returned in the clear, cool evening to gaze at the Colosseum by moonlight. Above the vast arena spread the sky of dark blue, where the constellations gleamed and scintillated, and around us all was still as death—the grandeur was really marvellous !

"* * * The Church of S. Maria di Ara Coeli, on the Capitoline Hill, is noted for containing the figure of the infant Christ, called the Santissimo Bambino (holy baby), which is supposed to have miraculous effects in curing the sick, and in honour of which a festival is held annually from Christmas Day to Epiphany. We were fortunate to visit it on Christmas Eve, and in the dimly lighted church, saw the illuminated manger, and the Bambino.....The streets outside the church had the appearance of a fair. There were lines of stalls, covered with sweets and toys, fruits and cakes, and cheap pictures of the Bambino. Swamiji was amused and said, it reminded him of a *melā* in India. With tact and discretion we steered our way through the throng, and assisted the Swami in selecting various articles and also in buying some cakes and sweets which we subsequently found were not very delectable.

"* * * On several occasions we detached our attention from palaces, ruins and galleries, when they threatened to become a weariness, and drove to the Pincian Hill, which is laid out in walks and gardens... On one afternoon the sunset was exquisite, full of suggestion and mystery, while the last rays of beauty lingered like a heavenly memory of the day that is done...As we passed to and fro we caught glimpses of the beautiful Queen of Italy, in her carriage with the red liveries. But the Villa Borghese, nearly three miles in extent, is really the public park of Rome, and is the favourite resort of all classes. As we entered the Corso through the gateway of the Porta del Popolo. the incoming and outgoing carriages and persons surged and jostled. The Corso is one of the main thoroughfares, and so called from the horse races which took place in it during the Carnival. When driving to St. Peter's, we crossed the bridge of St. Angelo, on the west bank of the Tiber. * * *

"In the centre of the square in which St. Peter's stands, are an obelisk and two fountains ; and a colonnade and the Palace of the Vatican occupy the right-hand side. * * *

"St. Peter's, which is the largest church in the world, is built in the form of a Latin Cross. The height of the dome from the ground to the top of the Cross is 448 ft. The length of the Cathedral is 613 ft., and the circumference of the pillars which support the dome is 253 ft. As we moved inward to the vast interior, where in the far distance glowed mysteriously the twinkling tapers on an altar, we were not at once

Koviloor Digital Library

impressed with the immensity of its scale, but we felt dazzled by its strength and wealth. In the upper end of the nave is the chair of St. Peter, as also a bronze statue, the right foot of which is kissed by pilgrims.

"Was there ever a more imposing scene than the High Mass at St. Peter's on Christmas Day ! But it appealed to the senses more than to the understanding, for we found nothing subtle or spiritual in it. * * *

"* * * The Vatican adjoins St. Peter's and comprises the old and the new palace of the popes, and is said to possess 11,000 rooms. Immense treasures are stored in them. Here are the celebrated collections of pictures, the sculpture-galleries and the museums, in which all the periods of the arts are represented. Here are the Sistine and Pauline Chapels, the former with Michael Angelo's ceiling paintings, and 'The Last Judgment' of the same artist on the altar wall, and admirable paintings of Botticelli, Perugino, and Signorelli. Here are also the painted loggie (arcades) of Raphael, the inspirational artist, and works of other celebrated painters. Here is the Vatican library containing priceless documents on papyrus (an Egyptian plant). The number of manuscripts is said to be about 25,000, and the printed books exceed 200,000 volumes, and include a great number of bibliographical rarities. * * *

"* * * We made an interesting excursion to the Campagna, one of the delights of Rome, and a drive at sunset along the Appian Way, between the ruined tombs and fragments of villas of Romans, we found a most refreshing change from pictures and churches.....We alighted on the Appian Way to visit a columbarium, which is a subterranean sepulchre having niches in the wall to receive the urns containing the ashes of the dead. When we descended to the Catacombs of Calixtus we felt for a while the breath of a faith of new humanity, of a faith which glorified the Catacombs where only silence and peaceful slumber were to be found. * * *

"There is no doubt that during the few days we stayed in Rome, our time was occupied in the most edifying and advantageous way. * * *"

When the party left Rome, however, the Swami was not sad, for he realised that each day was bringing him nearer to the desired event,—the sailing for India. India was at all times in his thought. He was often impatient, and were it not that his mind was much diverted, his impatience would have got the upperhand. Indeed, he was, by nature, as anxious to leave a new place as to visit it. As it was, the next move was to Naples, whence the ship was to be taken. But there were still several days before the date of sailing. So it was decided to occupy the time in seeing Naples

Koviloor Digital Library

and its famed vicinity. A day was spent in seeing Vesuvius, the party ascending to the crater by the funicular railway. While they were there, a mass of stones were thrown up into the air from the crater. Another day was devoted to visiting Pompeii, and the Swami was charmed with all he saw there. He was especially interested to see a house recently excavated, containing frescoes, fountains and statues, exactly as they were found, which made it vastly more interesting, as usually the contents found in the houses are removed to the museum at Naples. He was much surprised to notice the similarity between many of the religious symbols as found among the ruins and those prevalent at the Temple of Puri in his own land. The Museum and the Aquarium also attracted the attention of the party. But what most concerned them was the approach of the date for sailing. When the ship arrived from Southampton, among its passengers being, as noted afore, Mr. Goodwin, the Swami was beside himself with joy, and exclaimed, "Now, at last, it will be India,—my India !"

The steamer which left Naples on the 30th of December 1896, was to reach Colombo on January the fifteenth, 1897. It was, therefore, to be many days on the ocean, but the voyage was not tedious. The Swami was throughout in excellent spirits and greatly benefited by the rest. Because of a certain incident this voyage was most eventful. In the Mediterranean, about midway between Naples and Port Said, the Swami had a phenomenal vision which made a profound impression upon his mind. In conversations concerning religious subjects, now and then, Christianity was in the foreground. Moreover, it must be taken into account that during his travels in Catholic Europe he was startled to find the identity of Christianity with Hinduism in many points of ceremonial details. Writes the Sister Nivedita :—

"The Blessed Sacrament appeared to him to be only an elaboration of the Vedic *prasâda*. The priestly tonsure reminded him of the shaven head of the Indian monk ; and when he came across a picture of Justinian receiving the Law from two shaven monks, he felt that he had

Koviloor Digital Library

found the origin of the tonsure. He could not but remember that even before Buddhism India had had monks and nuns, and that Europe had taken her orders from the Thebaid. Hindu rituals had its lights, its inr cense, and its music. Even the sign of the Cross, as he saw it practised, reminded him of the touching of different parts of the body, in certain kinds of meditation. And the culmination of this series of observations was reached, when he entered some cathedral and found it furnished with an iusufficient number of chairs, and no pews ! Then, at last, he was really at home. Henceforth he could not believe that Christianity was foreign."

But to the dream in question : One night, shortly after he had retired, he had a dream in which an old man, with a venerable beard, Rishi-like in appearance, stood before him, saying, "Observe well this place that I show to you. You are now in the island of Crete. This is the land in which Christianity began." The Swami then heard him say, "I am one of the Therapeutæ who used to live here." And he added still another word which escaped the Swami's memory, but which might be "Essene," the name of a sect of which Jesus the Christ is said to have been a member. They were monastic in tendency, with a liberal religious outlook and a philosophy embracing the highest vision of unity. The word "*Therapeutæ*" unmistakably means "*Sons or disciples of the Theras*", from *thera*, an elder among the Buddhist monks, and *Putra*, in Sanskrit, means a *son*. The old man ended up with saying, "The truths and ideals preached by us have been given out by the Christians as having been taught by Jesus ; but for the matter of that, there was no such personality of the name of Jesus ever born. Various evidences testifying to this fact will be brought to light by excavating here." The Swami woke and at once rushed to the deck to ascertain in what neighbourhood the ship was in just then. As he did so he met a ship's officer, turning in from his watch. "What is the time", he asked him. "Midnight", he was told. "And where are we ?" "Just fifty miles off Crete !"

The Swami was startled at the singular coincidence which lent inevitable emphasis to the dream itself, and it set him thinking on the historicity of Jesus the Christ, about which

Koviloor Digital Library

it had never occurred to him to doubt. He felt that the Apostle Paul was in reality one of whom he could be sure, and he saw the meaning of the fact that the Acts of the Apostles was an older record than the Gospels themselves, and moreover that a curious admixture must have occurred between the views of the Therapeutæ and the sect of Nazarenes, thus conferring upon Christianity both a philosophy and a personality. But these were only speculations which, he thought, could not be offered as conclusive evidence in support of the origin and history of Christianity. He, however, had no doubt about the historical fact that in Alexandria a meeting had taken place of the Indian and Egyptian elements contributing considerably towards the moulding of Christianity. It is said that Swamiji wrote to an archæologist friend of his in England about his dream, and asked him if he could do anything to find out if there was any truth in it. It was sometime after the Swami's death that a newspaper telegram appeared in *The Statesman* of Calcutta stating that, some Englishmen in the course of excavations in Crete came across valuable records which bore wonderful revelation on the past history of Christianity.

Whatever doubts might have shadowed the Swami's intellectual reasoning on the matter, the dream did not make him yield a whit his radiant love and adoration to the Son of Mary. There was the instance when a Western disciple requested him to give his blessing to a picture of the Sistine Madonna, he out of reverence declined to do so, and touched the feet of the Divine Child instead. There was also the instance when he turned upon another and exclaimed with fire in his eyes, "Madam, had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth I would have washed His feet, not with my tears but with my heart's blood !"

Apart from this experience, to which he often recurred in mind, the Swami was occupied with thoughts of India. Other hours were whiled away in playing chess, in which he was an adept even from his early manhood. As the days passed he found himself brighter and better, and his mind was now

Koviloor Digital Library

vigorously forming plans for future work, both in India and abroad.

There was rather an unpleasant experience which the Swami had on his way to India between Aden and Colombo. As fellow-passengers he found two young foreigners, who were Christian Missionaries. They forced a conversation on him concerning the contrast between Hinduism and Christianity. They pursued their usual method of argument, characterised by bigotry and "I'll-dare-you-deny-it" type of theology. The Swami put a few simple questions to them in the way of a reply, and when they found themselves vanquished at every point and driven to a ridiculous position they lost their temper and became rude and virulent, and resorted to violent abuse against the Hindus and their religion, until the Swami could bear it no longer. At length, suddenly walking closer to one of the speakers he seized him quietly but with great strength by the collar and said, half-humourously and half-grimly, "If you again abuse my religion, I'll throw you overboard!" The frightened Christian Missionary, seeing the Swami assume an apparently determined look, "shook in his shoes" and said under his breath, "Let me go, Sir, I'll never do it again!" From that time he was most obsequious to the Swami on all occasions and endeavoured to remedy his misbehaviour by exceeding kindness.

In the course of a conversation in Calcutta with a disciple, the Swami was pointing out to him that religion should be the groundwork of united interest in our actions, and how true feeling for one's religion should bring about the manly spirit so much needed in India. It was then that he alluded to this singular incident and asked the disciple, "My dear Sinha, if anybody insults your mother, what will you do?" "I would fall upon him, Sire, and teach him a good lesson!" "Well said, Priyo," returned the Swami, "but, now, if you had the same positive feeling for your own religion, the true Mother of our Country, you could never bear to see any Hindu brother converted into a Christian. Nevertheless, you see this occurring every day, yet you are

Koviloor Digital Library

quite indifferent! Man, where is your faith! Where is your patriotism! Everyday the Christian Missionaries are abusing Hinduism before your faces, and yet how many are there whose blood boils with righteous indignation at the fact?"

As a contrast to this distinctly unpleasant experience with the Missionaries on the steamer, a quite different one occurred at Aden. While visiting the places of interest at this port, he drove to the Tanks, three miles inland. Espying a man at a distance busily engaged in smoking his *hookah*, he left his English disciples and walked rapidly towards him. He was highly delighted at seeing an Indian face after such a long period. Accosting him as "brother", he opened a conversation with him. The man happened to be a Hindusthani betel-leaf seller. His friends coming up to him were startled to see him sitting by a common man. They thought, "Who is this man to whom he is speaking in such an intimate way?" But they were greatly amused when they found the Swami addressing the stranger, quite boyishly, "Brother, do give me your *chhilum*," and puffing away at it with great glee. Mr. Sevier then made merry with him by saying, "Now we see! It was this then that had made you run away from us so abruptly!" He had not had a *hookah* smoke for years. Then when the man learned, *who* his guest was, he fell at the Swami's feet in pious salutation. Speaking of this incident, the Swami's companions say, "The shop-keeper could not have resisted him, for he had such an endearing way about him when asking for anything that he was simply irresistible. We shall never forget that insinuous look on his face when he said with childlike sweetness, "*Bhâiyâ*, do give me your *chhilum*."

Nothing of interest further occurred except an event which is always sensational to travellers by sea. Signals of distress were noticed some distance from the coast of Malabar, sent by a coasting-vessel that had been becalmed. It was discovered that the vessel was almost without food and water and the captain requested immediate help. The captain of the Prinz Regent Luitpold signalled back; the steamer

Koviloor Digital Library

slowed down ; a boat was sent from the vessel in distress and fitted by the steamer with requisites.

In the early morning of January the fifteenth, the coast of Ceylon was outlined in the distance. And it was a beautiful view ; the sun just rising, lent a roseate hue to the general scene. Gradually, the harbour of Colombo with the majestic Cocoa Palms and the yellow sands on the shore came in sight. No one was more delighted than the Swami Vivekananda by the fact that the steamer was coming into port. This was India, and the Swami was beside himself with excitement. But he was totally unaware of what he was to meet with when the ship came into the port of Colombo. For representatives of all bodies in Indian society had assembled on the shore. The Swami had casually written to India some months previously of his intended return and the news spread rapidly throughout the group of disciples in Southern India and was flashed to distant Ceylon. Finally all India knew of it. In many cities of the South, the inhabitants were making ready to receive him with unprecedented honours and to offer to him addresses of welcome. One of his *guruBhâis* had come to Ceylon to meet him ; others were on the way, and in Madras and in Calcutta there was great excitement over his coming arrival. The newspapers had been often filled with his praises ever since his celebrated address at the Parliament of Religions. Numerous telegrams of invitation and congratulation awaited him in Colombo. He was to find that he had become the "man of the hour" in the world of Indian life ; but he was also to find that before him lay the tremendous task of preaching the Dharma in terms of re-valuation and modern revival. But now to the scene of enthusiasm that awaited him and the great welcome and ovation given him by many thousands of the citizens of Colombo,—an ovation which was the first event in a grand march of triumph and national recognition from Colombo in the far south to Almora in the distant north.

Koviloor Digital Library

XCIV.

A NATIONAL RECEPTION : IN CEYLON.

The home-coming of the Swami Vivekananda may be regarded, without hesitation, as a great event in the history of Modern India,—for all India rose to do him honour unparalleled in its record, and with him came a reinvigoration of the whole Indian spirit. Looming as he did at the time—and ever since—as the Arch-Apostle of Hinduism of his age, upon the national horizon, and regarded by it as the Prophet of a Re-interpreted Hinduism, an "Aggressive Hinduism," new in statement, teeming with potential powers and with an altogether new and unapologetic consciousness,—the Swami Vivekananda was indeed the Man of the Hour and the Harbinger of a new era. It is no wonder, therefore, that his coming was awaited anxiously by millions upon millions of his native land. For more than three years the Indian public had been made aware of the great work of interpreting Hinduism before the Western nations, which the Swami had been carrying on with signal success. For more than three years, therefore, all India had looked up to him as to some Mighty Achârya of old born again to revivify and shed lustre on the fading glories of the Religion Eternal, and to carry her banner throughout the whole civilised world. New forces had been at play in India itself ever since the Triumph at the Parliament of Religions. Through the study of the Swami's lectures and utterances, the eyes of a great mass of educated Indians had been opened to the undetected and hidden beauties and treasures of their religion, and they came more and more to see how Hinduism alone could claim the supreme position of being a Universal Religion. They had come to know that the Swami possessed incalculable personal powers and spiritual realisations, [and that as a true patriot he had made an absorbing study of India's complex

Koviloor Digital Library

problems. Thus they were more than anxious to see him and hear his message to his countrymen, believing him to be not only the *Guru* of thousands of devoted Western disciples, but accepting him as the *Guru* of the Indian Nation as well. They had heard the West praise this great Hindu Sannyâsin in the highest terms, not only as a monk and teacher, but as a patriot of patriots and as a MAN. They had seen or read of the wild enthusiasm of the great gatherings in Madras and Calcutta assembled to convey to him their congratulations on his brilliant success at the Parliament of Religions, and they had studied with admiration his inspiring replies to their addresses and to the one sent by the Maharajah of Khetri. These were still fresh in their memory following, as national enthusiasm, in the wake of his prestige.

When the news broke forth across the land that the Swami Vivekananda had left Europe for India, influential committees were formed in the largest cities for his reception. Two of his own *gurubhâis* hastened to Ceylon and Madras to greet him on his arrival. Others, personal disciples of the Swami himself, had made their way from Bengal and the Northern provinces to the city of Madras, awaiting his arrival there. Immediately, the journals throughout the country commenced a series of brilliant editorials, eulogistic of his personality and work. This still further inflamed the national expectancy.

The Swami himself was in entire ignorance of these great preparations in his honour. Quietly and serenely and in meditation, or in converse upon the history of nations, or in rest, he spent the time aboard the steamer Prinz Regent Luitpold. His mind was occupied with a hundred plans for the re-animation and re-organisation of the Indian *Dharma*. He was constantly drawing comparisons and reflecting on his experiences in Western lands. While in the West, his mind had always been occupied with the study of the history of the whole world and with the relation of the world to Hindusthan, and of the problems and destiny of India itself. More and more the spirit of an awakened National Consciousness had descended upon him, and he had been writing in his letters to

Koviloor Digital Library

his *gurubhâis* and Indian disciples the method and the means of bringing it about, with a view to inspire them with his own fire and enthusiasm. Even in the days of his American work, he had felt intuitively that a new epoch in his Mission was opening up for him, and now he knew it had come to hand. For many months back in the city of Detroit, he had once been talking with some disciples concerning the overwhelming difficulties he had met with in presenting Hinduism to an aggressively self-conscious Christian public, and as to how he had spent the best part of his vital forces in creating, among the Western nations, a religious reverence for what India had given as an intellectual and spiritual inheritance to the world. He was in one of those apostolic moods that often seized him after much strenuous labour. It was a late evening hour; he had been speaking in the stillness and the twilight. Suddenly his whole body shook with a fever of emotion, and he cried out: "India will hear me! What are the Western nations! I shall shake India to its foundations! I shall send an electric thrill through its national veins! Wait! You shall see how India will receive me. It is India, my own India, that knows truly how to appreciate that which I have given so freely here, and with my life's blood, as the Spirit of Vedanta. India will receive me in triumph." He spoke with a prophetic fervour, and those who heard him said that it was not himself for whom he was praying for recognition, but for that Gospel which he felt *must* become for all future times the Gospel for all nations of the world,—India's Gospel, the Gospel of the Vedas and Vedanta! Now all this was coming to pass in surest ways in the immediate future. Aye, the whole country rose like one man to receive him with triumph, and he found himself in the very height of his destiny.

It did not come to the Swami, therefore, as a great surprise when he heard, as the steamer arrived at Colombo, that a tremendous reception was to be given him and that masses of human beings were swarming to the landing-ghats to meet him. The rest of the story had better be told in the language

Koviloor Digital Library

of eye-witnesses, and as recorded at the time in one or other of the many Indian journals. The following is taken from a local paper :—

"The fifteenth of January will be a memorable day in the annals of the Hindu community of Colombo, being the day on which the Swami Vivekananda, a teacher of the most wonderful abilities and attainments, a teacher who belongs to the most sacred order of the Hindu spiritual lights, the Sannyâsins of India, was welcomed by them. His visit is calculated to prove an epoch-marking one, heralding the dawn of an unprecedented spiritual activity.

"As the day was closing and the night approached, when the auspicious and sacred hour of '*Sandhyâ*' noted by the Hindu Shâstras as the best suited for devotion came round as the harbinger of the coming great events of the day, the sage of noble figure, of sedate countenance with large, luminous eyes, arrived, dressed in the orange garb of a Sannyâsin, accompanied by the Swami Niranjanânanda and others... No words can describe the feelings of the vast masses and their expressions of love, when they saw the steam launch bearing the sage, steaming towards the jetty...The din and clamour of shouts and hand-clapping drowned even the noise of the breaking waves. The Hon Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepped forward, followed by his brother, and received the Swami and garlanded him with a beautiful Jasmine wreath. Then came a rush...No amount of physical force could hold back the great multitude. In their wild enthusiasm of waving hats and handkerchiefs many of these were lost....At the entrance to Barnes Street, an exceedingly handsome triumphal arch formed of branches, leaves, and flowers of the Cocoanut tree, bore a welcome motto to the Swami. All too soon the splendid pair of horses that awaited his landing in front of the G. O. H. carried away the Swami to the pandal at Barnes Street. Every available carriage was in motion and hundreds of pedestrians wended their way to the triumphal-arched pandal which had been decorated with the best of taste in a most elegant style with palms and evergreens etc. There the Swami alighting from the carriage, walked in procession attended with Hindu honours, such as, the flag, the sacred umbrella, the spreading of the white cloth etc. An Indian band played select airs. A host of persons joined the procession at Barnes Street, and then, together with the Swami, marched on to another beautiful and artistic pandal in front of the bungalow prepared for his temporary residence in Cinnamon Gardens. Both sides of the road leading from the first pandal to the second, a distance of a quarter of a mile, were lined with arches festooned with palm leaves. As soon as the Swami entered the second pandal, a beautiful artificial lotus flower unfolded its petals and out came a bird

Koviloor Digital Library

from inside and flitted about. But none of the charming decorations and splendid *tâmâshâs* attracted the huge gathering, for each individual was struggling to have a view of the Swami. In their struggle to see him, great numbers broke down the decorations in their onrush. The sage and his disciples took their seats amidst a shower of flowers. After a little silence was restored, a musician took his violin in hand and played a charming air; and the sacred Tamil hymns of "Thevaram", two thousand years old, were sung; and then a Sanskrit hymn composed especially in the Swami's honour was intoned. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepping forward, bowed to the Swami in Oriental fashion and then read an address of welcome on behalf of the Hindus. (The Address of Welcome is given in the "Complete Works," Page 549.)

"Then rose the Swami amidst deafening cheers and responded to the address in an eloquent and impressive style, peculiarly his own. The words,—simple and plain though they were, carried away the feelings of the huge audience.....

"The Swami, in the course of his reply pointed out that the demonstration had not been made in honour of a great politician, or a great soldier, or a millionaire. 'The spirituality of the Hindus', he said, 'is very well marked by the princely reception which they have given to a begging Sannyâsin. He was not a general, not a prince, not a wealthy man, yet men great in the transitory possessions of the world, and much respected were seen before him, a poor Sannyâsin, to honour him, even to worship him' 'This', he said, 'is one of the highest expressions of spirituality, caring neither for wealth nor for worldly position'. He urged the necessity of keeping religion as the backbone of the national life, if the nation was to live, and disclaimed any personal character for the welcome he had received, insisting that it be the recognition of a principle.

"The Swami then entered the house beautifully lighted up and excellently furnished. Here another garland was placed around his neck, and he was escorted to a seat. The number of people that had taken part in the formal proceedings of the meeting was increasing outside and was unwilling to disperse. Finding that many were waiting to have a further glance at him, Swamiji came out and after the manner of the Hindu Sannyâsins he saluted and blessed them all.

We are indebted to Mr. Goodwin, who accompanied the Swami throughout this memorable tour, for the subsequent account of his travels in Ceylon and Southern India, which is mostly reproduced here interspersed with such newspaper reports as give further glimpses of the subject :—

Koviloor Digital Library

"During the succeeding day, the bungalow occupied by the Swami, (which was henceforth named 'Vivekananda Lodge') was thronged incessantly by visitors. It became, indeed, a place of pilgrimage, the honour and respect shown to the Swami being something of which no conception can be formed by those who are unaccustomed to the religious demonstrations of the East. This was giving practical effect to the theory which obtains in India alone,—that of *Guru Bhakti*. Among the many visitors were men of all stations in life, from the first officials in Ceylon to the poorest of the poor. An interesting incident illustrative of the religious character of Indians may be mentioned. A poor woman, who was evidently in distress, came to see the Swami here, bearing in her hand the customary offering of fruit. It appeared that her husband had left her in order that he might be undisturbed in his search for God. The woman wanted to know more about God, she said, so that she could follow in his footsteps. The Swami advised her to read the Bhagavad-Gitâ and pointed out to her that the best way to make religion practical to one in her station, was the proper fulfilment of household duties. Her reply was very significant. 'I can read it, Swamiji,' she said, 'but what good will that do me if I cannot understand it and feel it?'—a striking example, first, of the truth of the saying that religion does not rest in books, and, secondly, of the amount of deep religious thought to be found among the poor and apparently uneducated of the East.

"To those who were new to Eastern religious customs there were many incidents of great interest. One of these to which allusion may be made, is the practice of a religious teacher giving a fruit to his pupils, a present of any kind from a man of God being greatly treasured by the recipients. Another interesting circumstance was the giving of a dinner to Swamiji by a Hindu from the United Provinces. He was a poor man, but nevertheless he had been unsparing in the preparation of the meal. Neither the Swami nor anyone else could induce him to be seated in the presence of the Swami, as this would have been in his eyes a mark of disrespect to one in the Swami's position.....

"On the evening of the sixteenth the Swami gave a stirring address in the Floral Hall to an audience which overflowed the building. The subject of this first public lecture in the East, after his arrival from his triumphs in the West, was, 'India, the Holy Land' (*Vide* "Complete Works", pages 550—555.)

"The following day, Sunday, was again spent in receiving visitors, until the evening, when the Swami paid a visit to the temple of Shiva. The crowd which accompanied him was immense, and a most interesting characteristic of the evening was the repeated stopping of the carriage in order that the Swami might receive gifts of fruit, that garlands of flowers might be placed round his neck and rose-water sprinkled

Koviloor Digital Library

over him. It is a custom also, when an especially honoured guest is paying a visit to a house, to burn lights and display fruit on the threshold, and this was done at almost every Hindu dwelling which the procession passed, particularly in Checku Street, the heart of the Tamil quarter of Colombo. At the Temple the Swami was received with shouts of *'Jaya Mahâdeva !'* (Victory unto the Great God !) and after a short converse with the priests and others who had assembled, he returned to his bungalow where he found a number of Brâhmanas with whom he conversed until half-past two the following morning.

"On Monday, Swamiji paid a visit to Mr. Chilliah, whose house was decorated for this purpose in a most artistic fashion. Hearing that he was to arrive, thousands of spectators were waiting for him and when his carriage drew nearer and nearer, the enthusiastic cheering increased more and more, and garlands after garlands and flowers after flowers were showered upon him. He was seated in a place especially prepared for him, and was then sprinkled with the sacred waters of the Ganges. Swamiji himself then distributed sacred ashes which all received with sacramental joy. A picture of his own Master, Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna, having attracted the Swami's attention he at once got up and with great reverence made obeisance thereto. He then partook of light refreshments and expressed his joy on seeing that the house contained pictures of saints. This interesting meeting was brought to a close by the singing of several sacred songs.

'On Monday, the Swami delivered a second lecture to another large audience on the Vedanta philosophy, at the Public Hall of Colombo. Standing on the platform in the yellow garb of a Sannyâsin and wearing an orange-coloured turban, a well-built and powerful figure, with his countenance shining with intelligence and spirituality, he made a most striking personality. The audience listened to a most powerful and lucid exposition of the philosophy of the Advaita. The central theme of his address was the advocacy of a universal religion, based on the Vedas. In the course of his lecture the Swami's attention was drawn to the European dress in which many Indians had appeared. He was evidently annoyed, and feeling it his duty he cautioned them against such slavish imitation. He said that European dress did not suit Orientals, that it appeared altogether inappropriate for dark-skinned races. It was not this dress or that which he recommended in particular, but the manner in which he found his countrymen foolishly aping foreign ways that called forth his criticism.

"On the morning of the nineteenth the Swami left Colombo for Kandy by rail in a special saloon. His original intention had been to take a steamer direct from Colombo to Madras, but on his arrival in Ceylon so many telegrams poured in beseeching a visit to Ceylonese and South-

Koviloor Digital Library

ern Indian towns, if only in passing, that he was induced to alter his plans and make the journey overland. At the Railway station at Kandy a large crowd awaited him with an Indian band and the temple insignia, to convey him in procession to a bungalow in which he was to take rest. When the cheering which greeted his arrival had subsided, an address of welcome was read of which the text was as follows :—

"Sreemat Vivekananda Swami.

'Revered Sir,

'On behalf of the Hindu Community we beg to offer you a very hearty welcome to Kandy and express our sincere hope that your visit to our mountain capital will be as pleasant to you as it is bound to be profitable to us.

'We cannot allow this occasion to pass without giving expression to the sentiments of esteem and admiration, which your single-hearted devotion to the cause of truth and the brilliant ability with which you have expounded its principles in lands other than India, have made us entertain towards you.

'Since your visit to America as the Representative of our Faith at the Parliament of Religions, we have watched your missionary career with the keenest interest, and it is with feelings of deep thankfulness that we hear of the unexpectedly large measure of success that has attended it in the Western World. The seeds of Eternal Truth which you and your fellow-workers are sowing with such self-denying perseverance are destined to yield a rich harvest of spiritual progress in the near future. That you may be long spared in health and strength to continue and consummate the labour of love you have undertaken, is the fervent prayer of your humble co-religionists.

'Kandy. (Signed) * * *

'January 19th, 1897'.

"The reply was again brief, and after a few hours' rest, during which the interesting points of the beautiful town were visited, the journey was resumed and Matale reached the same evening. On Wednesday morning the Swami began a coach-ride of two hundred miles,—through a country, the beauty of whose vegetation has placed it among the brightest spots in the world,—to Jaffna. Unfortunately, when some few miles beyond Dambool, a mishap occurred, one of the front wheels of the coach being smashed up in descending a hill, necessitating a stoppage of three hours on the roadside. Fortunately, the wheel did not come right off, or the carriage would have been overturned. After a long wait only one bullock-cart was secured from a distant village, and in it was put Mrs. Sevier with all the luggage. Then progress was made, but slowly, as the Swami and his companions had to walk several miles

Koviloor Digital Library

before they got other bullock-carts. They passed the night in the carts and reached Anuradhapura passing through Kanahari and Tinpani, about eight hours late.

Anuradhapura is one of the oldest remaining towns, and is the largest 'buried city' in the world, containing ruins of temples and monasteries, which point to the fact that in its day, more than two thousand years ago, it was one of the most flourishing cities the world has seen. There are many deeply interesting Buddhistic relics, including a sacred Bo-tree (a shoot of the Maha-Bodhi tree at Buddha Gaya, said to have been planted in 245 B. C.), an ancient tank, speaking eloquently of the engineering genius of that age, and monuments known as Dagobas in which it is believed from discoveries which have been made, that huge quantities of jewelry and valuable property formerly belonging to Buddhist temples lie concealed from the time of the Tamil invasion of Ceylon. Close to the rest-house where the Swami and party stayed, 1,600 granite pillars mark the site of the great Brazen Palace, built in the second century B. C. The building in its day was nine stories high and contained one thousand dormitories for priests, besides other apartments; the roof was of brass; the great hall was supported on golden pillars resting on lions; in the centre was an ivory throne, with a golden sun and a silver moon, on either side.

"Under the shade of the Bo-tree mentioned above, the Swami gave a short address, to a crowd of two to three thousand people, interpreters translating, as he proceeded, into Tamil and Cingalese. Its subject was 'Worship,' and he exhorted his hearers to give practical effect to the teachings of the Vedas, rather than pay attention to mere empty worship. When Swamiji had proceeded so far, a huge crowd of fanatic Buddhist Bhikshus and householders—men, women and children—gathered round him and created such a horrid noise by beating drums, gongs and cans &c, in order to stop the lecture, that he was obliged to conclude abruptly. It would have ended in a serious riot between the Hindus and the Buddhists, had it not been for the persuasive appeal from Swamiji to the former urging them to practise restraint and patience under such provocation. This led the Swami to speak of the universality of religion, and, in this stronghold of Buddhism, he urged that the God worshipped either as Shiva, as Vishnu, as Buddha, or under any other name was one and the same, thus showing the necessity for not only tolerance but sympathy between followers of different creeds.

"From Anuradhapura to Jaffna is a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, and as the roads and the horses were equally defective, the journey was troublesome, saved only from tediousness by the exceeding beauty of the surroundings. Indeed, two successive nights, sleep was lost. On the way, however, a welcome interposition was caused by

Koviloor Digital Library

the reception of the Swami with all honour at Vavoniya, and the presentation of the following address :—

"'To His Reverence, Swami Vivekananda,
Apostle Representative of Hinduism
in the Parliament of Religions :—

'Worshipful Swami,

'We, the inhabitants of Vavoniya, a district in the Northern Province of the Island of Ceylon, beg to avail ourselves of this opportunity to approach you with a welcome in our midst. We could never expect, although we knew of your return from Europe, that you would favour us with a visit in this distant part of the Island, but by the consideration you have shown you have greatly elevated us, and it is not flattery to say, that you have laid us under an eternal debt of gratitude.

'About the services that have been rendered by you in the cause of our religion it were prudent to hold a discreet silence, but we cannot help mentioning that we have observed with pride and admiration your unswerving devotion in furthering a cause so noble. What endeared you to us most and won our hearts for you was, that kindness of disposition, liberality of sentiments, and disinterested self-sacrifice which you have taught us both by precept and example.

'Do accept for all that you have done on our behalf our thanks as a poor token of the regard and esteem we all entertain for you. That you may be long spared in health and that your efforts may prosper more and more is the fervent prayer of our humble selves.

'We beg to remain,
Most Revered Swami,
Your obedient pupils.'

"When the Swami had briefly replied, the journey was resumed through the beautiful Ceylon jungles to Jaffna. There was a reception of an informal character early the following morning at Elephant Pass where a bridge connects Ceylon with the Island of Jaffna. Twelve miles from the town of Jaffna, the Swami was met by many of the leading Hindu citizens, and a procession of carriages accompanied him for the remainder of the distance. It seemed as if every street in the town was decorated, nay, every house, in his honour. The scene, in the evening, when the Swami was driven in a torch-light procession to a large pandal erected at the Hindu College was most impressive. All along the route there was great enthusiasm, and there must have been at least from ten to fifteen thousand people accompanying him.

A local newspaper describing the public reception given to the Swami and his visit to Jaffna says :—

"Sunday, the twenty-fourth of January, will be ever remembered by

Kovilloor Digital Library

the Hindus of Jaffna as the day of the Swami Vivekananda's arrival here from Colombo by land. It was arranged by the Reception Committee that the Swami was to be received privately at Uppar on Sunday morning by a deputation of seven members, and that the public demonstration in the town in his honour should be reserved for the evening. But it was found that about one hundred persons composed of the èlite of the Hindu society were collected at Uppar anxiously awaiting his arrival on Sunday morning. Till 9 A. M. the coach with the distinguished monk and party accompanying him did not make its appearance. It was then resolved to go ahead another five miles and wait at Chavakachari. No sooner had that place been reached than the Swami and his party arrived by the mail coach. A procession was then formed to drive to the town, with the Swami, his *gurubhai*, Swami Niranjanânanda, and Mr. Advocate Naglingam in the first carriage,—a landau drawn by a pair—and the rest following in twenty carriages. Among those who received the Swami at Chavakachari and escorted him to the town were the well-known Advocates Naglingam and Kanagasabai, and many others too numerous to mention. It was 11-30 A. M., when the procession reached the town by the Central Road. The Swami and his party were accommodated at the residence of Mr. Proctor Ponnampalam, lent by him for the occasion. In spite of the short time at the disposal of the Committee, grand preparations had been made to accord the Swami a a fitting reception at the Hindu College in the evening. A magnificent pandal was put up in front of the institution and most tastefully decorated. The whole way from the town to the College,—a distance of about two miles—was festooned and illuminated, more especially that part of the route from the Grand Bazaar. Hundreds of banana palms were planted on both sides of the road and bunting and flags adorned the whole route. The scene was exceedingly picturesque, and great enthusiasm prevailed among the people. Thousands from all parts of the Island came to the city to get a glimpse of the renowned monk, and gathered all along the route to give him welcome. From six P. M. to twelve P. M. the Jaffna Kangesantura Road, as far as the Hindu College, was impassable for carts and carriages. The torchlight procession, which started at 8-30 P. M. attended with Indian music, was unprecedentedly imposing. It is estimated that more than fifteen thousand persons, all on foot, took part in it. The whole distance of two miles was so densely crowded that it looked like a sea of heads, yet perfect order prevailed from start to finish. At the gate of almost every house on both sides of the road throughout the entire distance, were placed Niraikudam and lamps, the inhabitants expressing in this manner the highest honours that could be offered. according to the Hindu idea, to a great Sannyâsin. The Swami alighted from the carriage and worshipped at the Sivan and Kathirasan temples, and

Koviloor Digital Library

was garlanded by the temple priests. Along the way also, many garlands were offered him by the local residents, so that when he reached the College at 10 P. M. he was most beautiful to look upon. The pandal was crammed even hours before the Swami arrived. Hundreds were outside seeking admission. People of all denominations had come, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Mohamedans. At the entrance of the pandal the Swami was received by Mr. S. Challappa Pillai, retired Chief Justice of Travancore, who conducted him to a raised dais and garlanded him.

"An address of welcome (See "Complete Works", page 556) was then read, to which the Swami replied in a most eloquent way for about an hour. On the evening of the day following, at 7 P. M. he spoke at the Hindu College, on Vedantism (See "Complete Works", pages 557—566.) for one hour and forty minutes. There were present about four thousand persons composed of the èlite of Jaffna society, and one and all were electrified with the Swami's stirring words. Following the lecture, Mr. Sevier at the request of the audience addressed the assembly on the reasons why he had accepted Hinduism and why he had come to India with the Swami".

With his address at the Hindu College at Jaffna, the Swami's journey across Ceylon came to a close. No words can record the warmth and unanimity with which he was received from Colombo to Jaffna. So great was the impression created even by this brief visit that urgent requests were made to him at every place to send teachers of the Order to preach the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in the Island. Further telegrams and letters of invitation from the representative bodies of the various towns in the interior poured in, praying the Swami to pay a short visit to them, but he was unable for want of time to meet their requests. Besides, he was tired out, even in these few days, with the constant rush of people coming to see him and pay their homage to him with offerings of fruits and flowers. "He would have been killed with kindness," as one of his companions remarks, "if he had stayed longer in Ceylon."

Koviloor Digital Library

XCV.

TRIUMPHAL TOUR THROUGH SOUTHERN INDIA.

At the Swami's request arrangements were made immediately to convey him and his party across the sea from the Island of Jaffna to the shores of his own native land. The voyage, about fifty miles, was commenced soon after midnight, and the weather being favourable, the crossing was throughout delightful. On Tuesday, the 26th of January, at about three P. M. the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban Roads. The Swami having been previously invited by the Rajah of Ramnad to Rameswaram, was about to leave for that place when he heard of the expected arrival of the Rajah himself to receive him in person at Pamban in the evening. The Swami was later on transferred from the ship in which he had made the voyage to the State-boat of His Highness. As soon as he entered it, the Rajah and all his staff prostrated themselves lengthwise before him. The Swami, however, raised his royal disciple to his feet. The meeting between the Prince and the monk was a most touching one, both evincing the deepest pleasure. The Swami feelingly said that as the Rajah had been one of the few to conceive of his going to the West and had encouraged and helped him in the accomplishment of that undertaking, it was highly felicitous that he should meet the Rajah on landing on Indian soil. When the State-boat reached the shore he was given a tremendous ovation by the citizens of Pamban. Here, under a decorated pandal, an address of welcome was read and presented to him. The Rajah added to this a brief personal welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling, and then the Swami gave a short reply pointing out that the backbone of the Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy, nor mechanical genius, but religion and religion alone, and

Koviloor Digital Library

this India alone could give to the whole world. He concluded with thanking the citizens of Pamban for their kind and cordial reception, and expressing his gratitude to H. H. the Rajah of Ramnad for all that he had done for him. (For the Address of Welcome and the Swami's reply, see "Complete Works," pages 567—569).

The proceedings of the meeting being now closed, the Swami was invited to enter the state-carriage of the Rajah of Ramnad and was driven towards the Raj Bungalow, the Rajah himself walking with his court officials. At the command of His Highness the horses were unharnessed, and the people and the Rajah himself drew the state-carriage through the town. For three days the Swami remained at Pamban to the delight of the citizens. The day following his arrival he paid a visit to the great temple of Rameswaram, one of the four *Dhâmas* or most sacred places of pilgrimage in India, like Jagannath, Dwarka and Badrinath. This visit deeply touched the Swami as he recalled his journey thither five years past, when as an unknown wandering Sannyâsin he had come there foot-sore, weary, bringing his pilgrimage throughout India to a close. How different were the circumstances under which he now visited it! When nearing the temple, the state-carriage in which the Swami was driven, was met by a procession which included elephants, camels, horses, the temple insignia, Indian music, and other evidences of the highest respect a Hindu can pay to one whom he recognises as a Mahatman. The temple jewels were displayed to the Swami and his disciples, and after they had been conducted through the building and its many architectural wonders pointed out—particularly the gallaries supported by a thousand pillars—the Swami was asked to address the great crowd of people who had assembled. And standing on the most sacred grounds of that famous temple of Shiva, he delivered a most stirring address on the true significance of a *Tirtha*, and of worship, charging the eager listeners, and through them all his co-religionists to worship Shiva by seeing Him not in images alone, but in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased. (See "Complete

Koviloor Digital Library

Works," pages 569 & 570). Mr. Naglingam acted as interpreter into Tamil. The Rajah of Ramnad was beside himself with the great spirit of the occasion. In consonance with the Swami's Rameswaram address, in which he sanctified the spirit of service as worship unto the Lord Himself, the Rajah on the very next day fed and clothed thousands of the poor. And in commemoration of the great occasion of the Swami's landing on the Indian soil on his return from his Western Mission, the Rajah began erecting a monument of victory, forty feet in height, bearing the following inscription:—

"*Satyameva Jayate.*

"This monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Rajah of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot, where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together with the Swami's English disciples on His Holiness' return from the Western Hemisphere where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness' philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedanta.

"January the 27th, 1897."

To continue the narrative in the words of Mr. Goodwin :—

"Then came the short trip from Pamban across to the mainland, and after breakfasting in one of the Chhatrams provided by the charity of the Rajah for the benefit of wayfarers, Tirupillani was reached, where an informal reception was given to the Swami. It was well nigh evening when Ramnad came in sight. The journey from the sea-coast proper had been made by bullock-cart, but when nearing Ramnad the Swami and party entered the state-boat which conveyed them across one of the large tanks that abound in Southern India. Thus the imposing reception took place on the banks of a lake, heightening the scenic effect of the great meeting itself. The Rajah, it goes without saying, took the leading part in the ceremony of welcome, and introduced the Swami to the leading citizens of Ramnad.

"The firing of cannon had announced to the waiting thousands the arrival of the Swami ; and at the time of landing numerous rockets shot forth into the air, and they continued to be fired at repeated intervals until the procession reached its goal. Marks of rejoicing and festivity were everywhere in evidence. The Swami was driven in the state-carriage, accompanied by the Rajah's own bodyguard under the command of his brother, while the Rajah himself directed the course of the procession

Koviloor Digital Library

afoot. Numerous torches flared on either side of the road, and both Indian and European music added life to the already lively proceedings, the latter playing 'See the Conquering Hero Comes', both on the landing of the Swami and on his approach to the city proper. When half the distance had been traversed, the Swami at the request of the Rajah descended from the state-carriage and took his seat in the handsome state-palanquin. Attended with all this pomp, he reached the Sankara Villa.

"After a slight rest, he was led into the large audience hall where thousands had gathered knowing that he would speak to them in reply to their address of welcome. As he entered the hall, shouts of triumph and joy resounded wildly, renewing the great enthusiasm which had been manifested all along the Swami's line of march by jubilant crowds. The Rajah opened the meeting with a speech in which he highly eulogised the Swami, and then called upon his brother, Rajah Dinakara Sethupathi, to read an address of welcome (See "Complete Works", page 571) which was then presented to the Swami enclosed in a massive casket of solid gold of the most exquisite design and workmanship."

The Swami's reply was characterised as usual with most of his Indian lectures, by the richness and beauty of his thought and by his fiery eloquence,—no less than by the tremendous inspiration his own personality afforded—rousing the hearts of his people to a sense of the glory of their religion and the ideal of their national life and their duty to the Motherland. (*Vide* "Complete Works," pages 572—576).

"The Rajah closed the proceedings with the praiseworthy suggestion that the visit of the Swami to Ramnad should be commemorated by a public subscription to the Madras Famine Relief Fund.

"During his stay at Ramnad the Swami received numerous visitors in addition to lecturing in the Christian Missionary School kindly lent for the purpose, and attending a Durbar at the palace held in his honour. At the latter occasion the great hall was brilliantly lighted, the Rajah's own band playing. Here he received further addresses in Tamil and Sanskrit to which he replied, graciously referring to the large-heartedness of the Prince and to his religious temperament. In this respect he conferred on the Chief the title of 'Rajarshi', signifying thereby that the Prince was both a ruler and a sage in one. At the earnest solicitation of the Rajah the Swami then gave a short address into a phonograph on the need of Sakti Worship in India. Following on the visit to the Palace on the Sunday evening, a fresh start was made at midnight for the journey northwards to Madras.....

"Paramakudi was the first stopping-place after leaving Ramnad, and there was a demonstration on a large scale, many thousands following

Koviloor Digital Library

him in procession. An address of welcome was given to which the Swami made a touching reply (See "Complete Works", pages 577—580).

"At Manamadura, where the next halt was made, the Swami was taken in a long procession to a huge pandal under which, amidst deafening shouts of enthusiasm, an address of welcome, (See "Complete Works". page 581), both of the citizens of the neighbouring town of Sivaganga and those of Manamadura, was tendered him. He replied in a few well-chosen words (See "Complete Works", pages 582 & 583).

Again the journey was resumed,—the journey which was one continuous tour of triumph—until Madura, the famous city of ancient learning and magnificent temples and memories of old kingdoms, was reached. At this place Swamiji was housed in the beautiful bungalow of the Rajah of Ramnad. In the afternoon an address of welcome was presented him in a velvet casket, to which he replied with great fire and feeling. (For the address of welcome and Swamiji's reply, see "Complete Works," pages 584—587).

Three weeks of continuous travelling and speaking and receiving ovations made him feel tired and wearied out in body, but the vigour of his mind and spirit was indefatigable. Though in some of the latter places he visited he was not in a fit condition, physically, to deliver public speeches and receive visitors at all times of the day, he waived aside all consideration of his body and rose equal to the demands of the occasions. His heart was glad beyond measure to see such a tremendous amount of religious zeal and enthusiasm among his people, which led him to hope for great things to come in the future.

"While in Madura Swamiji paid a visit to the Great Temple, where he was received with marked respect. The Temple jewels were shown to him and his Western disciples, some of them being most valuable, especially, an elephant pearl. He spoke most cordially with the temple priests and referred enthusiastically to the marvellous architecture and art the temple embodied. In the evening he entrained for Kumbakonum. All along the way of journey, at each station at which the train stopped, crowds of people were in waiting to welcome him with immense enthusiasm. Even the smallest villages sent their quota of representatives. At every station garlands of flowers and short addresses of welcome were presented, and the people pressed in and about the train to have a glimpse of their hero ; it was as though they had come to see a royal

Koviloor Digital Library

pageant. The Swami in each instance was in the best of spirits and smilingly acknowledged their loving offerings. He replied most suitably to their addresses of welcome in a few words, considering the short time at his disposal, and regretted that time did not permit him to accede to their request of staying for a day in their midst. At Trichinopoly, in particular, at four o' clock in the morning, there were over a thousand people on the platform, who presented him with the following address :—

" 'To Swami Vivekananda Paramahamsa,

'Venerable Swami,—

'We, the citizens of Trichinopoly, offer you our sincerest respects. Great were our hopes of having thy worthy self, India's invaluable gem, amongst us for a day, and our only consolation is that what is our loss is Madras's gain.

'Children of God, religiously great, are the greatest of all human beings, and we need hardly say how thankful we are that our Heavenly Father has deemed it fit to bless us with your noble self.

'There is no doubt at all that Mother India will amply reward you for the fair fame and name you have earned for her. The praises of Hindu Theology are now heard in every nook and corner of the mighty British Empire.

'May the Almighty Father reward you for all your labours, and may this flame of enthusiasm you have enkindled in ourselves and in the glorious American nation burn for ever and eternally.

'Trichinopoly, 'We beg to remain, Venerable Swami,
'2nd February, 1897.' 'Your most obedient servants.'

"Addresses were also presented from the Council of the National High School, Trichinopoly, and also from the student population of that renowned city. The replies to these addresses were necessarily brief. At Tanjore somewhat later another large demonstration was made."

It may be imagined, from the previous demonstrations of honour and praise which he received from all quarters that his reception at Kumbakonum would be equally spontaneous and imposing. So it happened. The citizens knew no bounds in their great enthusiasm and rejoicings. The Swami had, in their opinion, not only represented Hinduism to the nations of the West, but re-represented Hinduism to itself, in new and luminous ways. Kumbakonum is famous throughout India as an important religious centre and for its historic associations. The Swami remained here for three days wishing to take a short rest, as he knew heavy work was awaiting him in Madras. Two addresses of wel-

Koviloor Digital Library

come were given to him, embodying the sentiments respectively of the Hindu community at large and of the Hindu students of the town. In reply the Swami delivered one of the most stirring addresses of his whole tour entitled, "The Mission of the Vedanta." (See "Complete Works", pages 588—600).

After the Swami left Kumbakonum on his way to Madras, he experienced anew, all along the line, that which had uninterruptedly occurred to him from the far-away city of Ramnad. At Mayavaram the citizens gathered in huge numbers filling the whole of the station platform, and a select committee headed by Mr. D. Natesa Aiyer presented him with an address. In reply the Swami thanked the assembly, saying in fervent humility that he had done nothing great and anyone else would have done better, and that he had only fulfilled the Mission which the Lord had commissioned him to do. He was grateful, he said, that his small labours should meet with such heart-felt response from the nation. The train steamed off amidst wild shouts of "Jaya Swami Vivekananda Maharajjiki Jaya !"

Again and again, as the train stopped on its way to the great city of Madras, the intermediary stations were packed with hundreds of Hindus who came to do reverence to the man who had roused the West to a fuller and more liberal consciousness of Religion in general and Hinduism in particular.

A remarkable incident which speaks volumes of the feelings of love and adoration in which the Swami was held by the millions of Southern India took place at a small railway station, some few miles from Madras city proper. Hundreds of people had assembled there to get a glimpse of the "Great Teacher" and pay their homage to him. They made earnest representations to the station-master to have the train stopped, even if only for a few minutes, but he hesitated. The crowds grew more and more impatient. Finally the station-master said that it could not be done, as the train conveying the Swami had just left the previous station. The

Koviloor Digital Library

people implored him again and again, but without any avail. At last, seeing the train coming in the distance, hundreds of people fell flat upon the railway line, determined by this extreme course to stop the train ! The station-master was panic-stricken and fled hastily away. The guard of the incoming train seeing the strange sight before him, realised the situation and at once ordered the train to be stopped. When the people found that their hearts' desire was about to be gratified, they crowded round the Swami's carriage and sent forth shouts of triumph in his name with wild enthusiasm. The Swami, visibly stirred by this display of profound emotion in his honour, appeared for a few moments before them, extending his hands lovingly in blessing, and briefly thanked them with all his heart.

Koviloor Digital Library

XCVI.

HISTORIC RECEPTION IN MADRAS.

Great enthusiasm prevailed for weeks in the city of Madras and its environs concerning the home-coming of the Swami Vivekananda. For weeks the Hindu public was on the tiptoe of expectation. Extensive preparations for the Swami's reception were being made. The streets and thoroughfares of the great city were profusely decorated with symbols, emblematic of distinction and triumph. Seventeen triumphal arches were erected. Blazing mottoes of welcome were everywhere in evidence, such as, "Long Live the Venerable Vivekananda !", "Hail, Servant of God !", "Hail, Servant of all Great Sages of the Past !", "The Awakened India's Hearty Greetings to the Swami Vivekananda !", "Hail ! Harbinger of Peace !", "Hail, Sri Ramakrishna's Worthy Son !", "Welcome, Prince of Men !", and amongst Sanskrit Slokas, was "*Ekam Sat Viprâh Bahudhâ Vadanti*!" For days previous, committees of reception and arrangement had been at work. The finest men in Madras like the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer, took an active interest in the preparations. Others belonging to the best circles of the Madras Presidency, came from distant parts, as the representatives of Rajahs and civic groups to welcome the Swami. For days previous to the great event, the Madras papers were filled with editorials concerning the Swami and the grand preparations that were being made for giving him a fitting reception. Even the "Madras Times" was constrained to remark as follows :—

"For the past few weeks, the Hindu public of Madras have been most anxiously expecting the arrival of Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu monk of world-wide fame. At the present moment his name is on everybody's lips. In the school, in the college, in the High Court, on the Marina, and in the streets and bazaars of Madras, hundreds of eager persons may be seen asking everybody, 'When will the Swami Viveka-

Koviloor Digital Library

nanda come?' Large numbers of students from the Mofussil, who have come up for the university examinations, are staying here, awaiting the Swami, and increasing their hostelry bills, despite the urgent call of their parents to return home immediately for the holidays. From the nature of the receptions received elsewhere in this Presidency, from the preparations being made here, from the triumphal arches erected at Castle Kernan, where the 'Prophet' is to be lodged at the cost of the Hindu public, and from the interest taken in the movement by the leading Hindu gentlemen of this city, like the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer, there is no doubt that the Swami will have a grand reception. It was Madras that first recognised the superior merits of the Swami and equipped him for his journey to Chicago. Madras will now have again the honour of welcoming the undoubtedly great man who has done so much to raise the prestige of his motherland. Four years ago when the Swami landed here, he was practically an obscure individual. In an unknown bungalow at St. Thome he spent some two months all along holding conversations on religious topics and teaching and instructing all comers who cared to listen to him. Even then a few educated young men with a 'keener eye' predicted that there was something in the man, 'a power' that would lift him above all others, and pre-eminently enable him to be the leader of men. These young men who were then despised as 'misguided enthusiasts,' 'dreamy revivalists', have now the supreme satisfaction of seeing *'their* Swami', as they loved to call him, return to them with a great European and American fame. The Mission of the Swami is essentially *spiritual*.....Whatever differences of opinion followers of other creeds may have with him,..... few will venture to deny that the Swami has done yeoman's service to his country in opening the eyes of the Western world to 'the good in the Hindu'. He will always be remembered as the first Hindu Sannyâsin who dared to cross the sea to carry to the West the message of what he believes in as a religious peace....."

From the early hours of the morning the city wore the appearance, as if of a huge holy festival, and thousands upon thousands were seen making their way to the Station, many of them carrying flags and flowers, and making demonstrations of their joy and triumph. Thus, when the train, conveying the distinguished monk steamed into the Madras Station, the Swami was received with thundering shouts of applause and with an enthusiasm unprecedented in the annals of Madras. After the preliminaries of reception had been gone through, the elaborate procession commenced, the

Koviloor Digital Library

horses of the Swami's carriage being unharnessed to allow the citizens of Madras to have the satisfaction of drawing it for some distance. Tens of thousands of people crowded the streets. From many windows and verandahs people sought to gain a glimpse of the great procession which wended its way through a circuitous route to the palatial residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, known as the "Castle Kernan". All along the way the Swami, now sitting, now standing, constantly bowed in recognition to the vociferous shouts of triumph in his honour. The cynosure of all eyes, he appeared in the midst of that procession like a conqueror returning from the battlefield, crowned with glory—not a conqueror of earthly dominions, but a conqueror of hearts, not only in the contemplative East but in the materialistic West.

A leading paper describing the Swami's entrance into Madras and the public reception accorded to him wrote :—

"Due previous intimation having been widely given that Swami Vivekananda would arrive at Madras this morning by the South Indian Railway, the Hindu Community of Madras, of all ages and of all ranks—and in some instances, even women—including young children in primary schools, grown-up students in colleges, merchants, pleaders and Judges, people of all shades and varieties turned up to welcome the Swami on his return from his successful mission in the West. The railway station at Egmore, being the first place of landing in Madras, had been well fitted up by the Reception Committee who had organised the splendid reception in his honour. Admission to the platform was regulated by tickets rendered necessary by the limitation of space available in the interior of the station, and even such as it was, the whole platform from end to end was full, and towards the hour of the arrival, the crowds had become swollen and a rush was experienced at every move. In the gathering at the station all familiar figures in Madras public life were present; we did not miss any familiar face, whose absence might have caused general regret. The train steamed in at about 7-50 A. M., and as soon as it came to a standstill in front of the south platform, the crowds cheered lustily and clapped their hands, while a native band struck up a lively air. The members of the Reception Committee received the Swami on alighting. The Swami was accompanied by his *gurubhâis*, the Swamis Niranjanânanda and Shivânanda, and by his European disciple, Mr. J. J. Goodwin. On being conducted to the *dais*, he was met by Captain and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, who had arrived on the previous day, and Mrs. and Mr. T. G. Harrison, a Buddhist gentleman

Koviloor Digital Library

of Colombo. The procession then wended its way along the platform towards the entrance amidst deafening cheers and clapping of hands, the band playing ahead. At the portico, certain introductions were made. The Swami was garlanded as the band struck up the National Anthem. After conversing with those present for a few minutes, he entered a carriage and pair that was in waiting, accompanied by the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer and his *gurubhâis*, and drove off to Castle Kernan, the residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, Attorney, where he will reside during his stay in Madras. The Egmore Station was decorated with flags, palm leaves and foliage plants, and red baize was spread on the platform. The 'Way Out' gate had a triumphal arch with the words, 'Welcome to the Swami Vivekananda'. Passing out of the compound the crowds surged still heavier and heavier, and at every move, the carriage had to halt repeatedly to enable the people to make offerings to the Swami. In most instances, the offerings were in the right Hindu style, the presentation of fruits and cocoanuts—something in the nature of an offering to a god in a temple. There was a perpetual shower of flowers at every point on the route and under the 'Welcome' arches which spanned the whole route of the procession from the station to the Ice-House, along the Napier Park, *via* Chintadripet, thence turning on the Mount Road opposite the Government House, wending thence along the Wallaja Road, the Chepauk and finally across the Pycrofts' Road to the South Beach. During the progress of the procession along the route described, the reception accorded to the Swami at the several places of halt were right royal ovations, neither more nor less. The decorations and the inscriptions on the arches were expressive of the profoundest respect and esteem and the universal rejoicing of the local Hindu Community and also of the appreciation of his services to Hinduism. The Swami halted opposite to the City Stables in an open pandal and there received addresses with the usual formalities of garlanding.

"Speaking of the intense enthusiasm that characterised the reception, one must not omit to notice an humble contribution from a venerable-looking old lady, who pushed her way to the Swami's carriage across several layers of dense crowds, wishing to have a look at him, that she might thereby be enabled, according to her belief, to wash off her sins as she regarded him as an incarnation of Sambaddha Moorthy. We make special mention of this to show with what feeling of piety and devotion His Holiness was received this morning, and indeed in Chintadripet and elsewhere, camphor offerings were made to him, and at the place where he is encamped, the ladies of the household received him with Arathi, or the ceremony of waving lights, incense and flowers before an image of God. The speed of the procession had necessarily to be slow, very slow

Koviloor Digital Library

indeed, on account of the halts made to receive the offerings, and so the Swami did not arrive at Castle Kernan until half-past nine, his carriage being in the meanwhile dragged by the students who unharnessed the horses at the turn to the Beach and pulled it with great enthusiasm. Arrived at Castle Kernan, Mr. Krishnamachariar, B.A., B.L., High Court Vakil, read a Sanskrit address on behalf of the Madras Vidvanmanoranjini Sabhâ. This was followed by a Canarese address. At the close of this ceremony, Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer announced that the gathering might disperse leaving the Swami to take rest after the fatigue of his journey. The gathering accordingly dispersed. The Swami was installed in one of the magnificent chambers in the upper story of the Ice-House.

"Madras has not since its earliest days witnessed such a wholly popular and enthusiastic reception accorded to any gentleman, European or Indian, or to any Indian potentate. Even of all the official receptions, excepting the one held in honour of Lord Ripon, there was none in Madras which might be said to have equalled the reception given to the Swami Vivekananda. Altogether another ovation, more sincere in its spirit, more popular in its character and more significant of the signs of the times, has not been witnessed in Madras within the memory of the oldest man, and we dare say that the scenes of to-day will remain for ever in the memory of the present generation."

Reflecting on the enthusiasm which prevailed on the Swami's arrival in Madras the "Hindu", a leading journal of Southern India, writes in a semi-editorial way :—

"It is impossible to overestimate the enthusiasm and piety that moved the vast numbers that met to-day to receive Swami Vivekananda at the railway station. The *élite* of Madras was there and the splendid welcome that was accorded to the renowned sage is an index to the ingrained religious vitality of this great country. Religious reformers in India have always had such homage. It is not orthodoxy that is the chief characteristic of the Hindu, it is not unwillingness to change that is predominant in his constitution. If an established usage is to be broken off, if a new order of things is to be substituted, it is men like Swami Vivekananda that should take the lead. Customs have gone the way of the wind, cherished notions and ideals have been quietly cast aside, established usages and dogmas have been departed from when and where the true Reformer with a heart upright and soul uncontaminated, and with unselfish and disinterested motives led the way and himself stood unmoved. That is the secret of the success that has attended the efforts of the Swami. He crossed the seas and carried the banner of Vedanta to distant lands, and it is therefore that we welcome him back in the way we do. We offer him our heartiest welcome and

Koviloor Digital Library

trust that his stay amongst us may be productive of as much good to the people of this country as his sojourn in foreign lands has been to our brethren there."

Thus far for the reception which the Swami received from the distant town of Colombo to the city of Madras. But this is only the beginning. Like the joyous booming forth of cannon through the distance, echoing and re-echoing, is the note of that vast triumph which becomes mightier and mightier as the Swami enters farther and farther into Hindusthan,—until like some national upheaval, it resounds echoing and re-echoing with overwhelming force from Ceylon to the Himalayas. And in the wake of this triumphant course, about the personality of this Master-Man and the message he now gives forth, arises, with prophetic meaning, the Re-Awakening of Hindusthan.

The Swami remained but nine days in Madras and according to one paper it was a regular nine days' festival of worship in his honour, a veritable "Navarâtri". But it was veritably an epoch in the national history of India, for it was during these days in Madras that Vivekananda gave out in that series of six lectures his message to India which electrified the whole country from this distant southern city to Almora and shook India to its foundations. But of this later on, when we shall deal with the ideas he promulgated and the practical means and methods he suggested for the regeneration of his motherland.

The following Sunday was the day of the presentation of addresses. The Madras Reception Committee took the lead with an elaborately got-up address (See "Complete Works", page 600). Addresses were then read and presented on behalf of the Vidvat Vaidik Sabhâ and the Social Reform Association of Madras. Besides these, an address from the Maharajah of Khetri (*Ibid*, page 601) and twenty other addresses in Sanskrit, English, Tamil and Telugu, were also read and presented to the Swami. When the time for his reply to them came, the rush and tumult of the vast concourse of people, numbering more than ten thousand, the majority of whom owing to want of space in the hall had to remain out-

Koviloor Digital Library

side, became so uncontrollable that he was forced to leave the hall and mount to the box-seat of the handsome carriage and pair in which he had been driven, and thus speak in the Gita fashion, to use his own way of expressing himself. But as it was still impossible to make himself heard in the open air to such a great gathering which was ever pushing closer in their endeavour to approach the carriage, he had soon to give up the idea of proceeding further with his lecture, and postpone his full reply to a future occasion. He therefore ended his address (*Ibid*, page 602—604) with thanking them for their kind and cordial reception and saying that instead of being displeased he was intensely delighted with their show of marvellous enthusiasm. He advised them, only to make it permanent, to keep it up and not to let the fire die out, as in working out great things in India he would require their help and such enthusiasm. His words created a tremendous stir among the multitude.

Besides his Reply to the addresses of welcome Swamiji delivered five public lectures in the city of Madras,—two in the Victoria Hall, one in the Pacheyappah's, one in the Triplicane Literary Society and the last in Harmston's Circus Pavilion,—due consideration of which will be taken in the chapter on "His Message to India." The subjects of these memorable lectures were, "My Plan of Campaign," "Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life", "The Sages of India", "The Work Before Us", and "The Future of India" (*Vide* "Complete Works", pages 605—657). He also presided at the annual meeting of the Chennapuri Annadana Samajam, an institution of a charitable nature, and gave a brief address in which he pointed out the superiority of the Hindu idea of charity over that of the legalised methods of other nations. He also paid a visit to the rooms of the Madras Social Reform Association. The public and his friends and disciples pressed him to remain in Madras and open a centre there, but he pointed out to them that it was impossible for him to do so then. However, he promised to send one of his *gurubhâis* to them as his representative, to carry out his ideas.

Koviloor Digital Library

Meanwhile he was receiving letters from his Western disciples and from the Vedanta Societies in America and England, informing him of the progress of the work in the distant West, and congratulating him on his successful propaganda there. Among other valuable papers which he received was the following address, the signatories of which include some of the most distinguished minds in the history of American thought :—

"To Swami Vivekananda,—India.

"Dear Friend and Brother,

"As members of the Cambridge Conferences devoted to comparative study in Ethics, Philosophy and Religion, it gives us great pleasure to recognise the value of your able expositions of the Philosophy and Religion of Vedanta in America and the interest created thereby among thinking people. We believe such expositions as have been given by yourself and your co-labourer, the Swami Saradananda, have more than mere speculative interest and utility,—that they are of great ethical value in cementing the ties of friendship and brotherhood between distant peoples, and in helping us to realise that solidarity of human relationships and interests which has been affirmed by all the great religions of the world.

"We earnestly hope that your work in India may be blessed in further promoting this noble end, and that you may return to us again with assurances of fraternal regard from our distant brothers of the great Aryan Family, and the ripe wisdom that comes from reflection and added experience and further contact with the life and thought of your people.

"In view of the large opportunity for effective work presented in these Conferences, we should be glad to know something of your own plans for the coming year, and whether we may anticipate your presence with us again as a teacher. It is our hope that you will be able to return to us, in which event we can assure you the cordial greetings of old friends and the certainty of continued and increasing interest in your work.

"We remain,

"Cordially and Fraternally yours,

Lewis G. Janes, D. D., Director.
C. C. Everett, D. D.,
William James,
John H. Wright,
Josiah Royce,
J. E. Lough,
A. O. Lovejoy,
Rachel Kent Taylor,
Sara C. Bull,
John P. Fox."

Koviloor Digital Library

Dr. Janes, as the reader knows, was the President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association ; Professor C. C. Everett was the Dean of the Harvard Divinity School ; Professor William James of the Harvard University is acknowledged to be one of the leading psychologists and philosophers in the Western Hemisphere ; Professor Wright was the Harvard Professor of Greek, who, it will be remembered, aided the Swami to secure credentials for the Parliament of Religions ; Professor Royce was the Harvard Professor of Philosophy and an extremely able metaphysician, who admittedly owed much to the Swami Vivekananda ; Mrs. Bull was the promoter of the Cambridge Conferences and one of the foremost women in America and Norway ; Mr. Fox was the acting honorary secretary of the Cambridge Conferences. Still another letter from the Brooklyn Ethical Association, equally eulogistic and much to the same effect, was received by the Swami at this time, as addressed, "To our Indian Brethren of the Great Aryan Family", and bearing the signatures of E. Sidney Sampson, President, and Lewis G. Janes, ex-President, of the Association. Copies of this address were printed and widely circulated in Madras to an eager and grateful public.

Still another address of greeting was sent to the Swami Vivekananda, signed by forty-two of his especial friends at Detroit ; it reads :—

"From this far-away city, in a land, old yet young, ruled by a people who are a part of the ancient Aryan race, the mother of nations, we send to you in your native country—India, the conservator of the wisdom of the ages—our warmest love and sincerest appreciation of the message you brought to us. We, Western Aryans, have been so long separated from our Eastern brothers that we had almost forgotten our identity of origin, until you came and with beautiful presence and matchless eloquence rekindled within our hearts the knowledge that we of America and you of India are one.

"May God be with you ! May blessings attend you ! May All-Love and All-Wisdom guide you !

"Om Tat Sat Om !"

Among other papers received by the Swami, mention may be made of one, the reading of which delighted him, not so much for its touching tribute to himself, but for the fact that

Koviloor Digital Library

his *gurubhâi* had been warmly received by his friends and disciples in New York and had made a beginning which promised to bear abiding fruit. On the occasion of presenting an address of welcome to the Swami Saradananda at the New Century Hall, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, on January the sixteenth, by the students of the Vedanta Society of the City, Dr. E. G. Day was reported to have spoken as follows:—

"Among the audience I recognise the faces of many who gathered to hear the sublime teachings of the Vedanta from the lips of the gifted and well-beloved Master, Vivekananda, and of many who mourned when their friend and teacher left, and who earnestly long for his return. I wish to assure you that his mantle has fallen on worthy shoulders in the person of the Swami Saradananda who will now teach the Vedanta studies among us. I am sure that I voice your sentiments when I say that we are ready to extend to him the love and loyalty we had for his predecessor. Let us extend to the new Swami a hearty welcome."

These addresses filled the Swami's heart with many memories of happy discourse with his friends and well-wishers and the devotion of the large group of loving disciples he had left behind him in Detroit and other cities of America.

Even as it had occurred to the Master, so it occurred to the Swami now. People of all shades flocked to him at all times of the day ; brilliant conversations were held, too numerous to mention here, and the Swami spent long hours with the many friends who had known and loved him in days previous to his departure for the West, and also with such as now met him for the first time. Followers of various sects, and Pandits of various branches of learning came to see him. There was that day when a great representative of the orthodox *Vaikhanasa* school of *Agamas*, a venerable old man who came from Tirupati, fell at his feet recognising his greatness, and garlanding him with flowers, spoke of him with tears of joy in his eyes as Vikhanasa Himself come again. Vikhanasa is the founder of that school which bears His name and is believed by His followers to be an Incarnation of Vishnu. It was Karma Yoga which formed the special feature of that Agamic school and this man said, after hearing the Swami's exposition of it, "Oh Swamiji, you are more versed

Koviloor Digital Library

in the principles of the *Vaikhanasa* school of the *Agamas* even than I, who from my cradle have been nurtured amidst its traditions and teachings."

But all this idolising worship and unique attention paid to him by hundreds and thousands were entirely lost upon the Swami. He saw the enthusiasm of the masses not in the light of a personal admiration of himself, or even of his work, but in the light of a tremendous national appreciation of India's spiritual ideals and culture, of which he had become the mighty spokesman through the grace of the Lord. From Ramnad to the city of Madras, a long distance through the land of Hindusthan, though he was received with such unprecedented ovations, his great humility born of Jnânam prevented in his case what in the case of any other would have developed into an excusable conceit. Surveying the perspective of the Swami's tour of triumph and its result upon his mind, an Indian lecturer truly said at one of the commemoration meetings in America long after the Swami's *Mahâsamâdhi* :—

"Everywhere he was received most cordially and entertained in right royal fashion. In fact, the receptions and ovations given to Swami Vivekananda were unique in the annals of the history of India. No prince, no Maharajah, nor even the Viceroy of India has ever received such a hearty welcome and such spontaneous expressions of love, reverence, gratitude and respect as were showered upon the blessed head of this great, patriot-saint of modern India....Those who have read the book named 'From Colombo to Almora', will remember what national pathos, enthusiasm and spiritual zeal were aroused in the hearts of the people by the return of the most worthy disciple of the Blessed Lord Sri Ramakrishna, our Master and Spiritual Guide.

"India indeed knows how to honour a spiritual hero. As Europe and America know how to honour their political or their military heroes when they return from the battlefield with their hands smeared with the life-blood of their innocent victims, so India on the contrary is the only country in the world where a spiritual hero receives similar honour when he returns from the spiritual battlefield after gaining victories of peace and love over inharmony and sectarian fight. The interest of the Hindu lies in religion ; the Hindus do not care so much for politics or commercialism as for religion. Even the most illiterate peasant knew what Swami Vivekananda was doing here ; and he was eagerly waiting to hear

Koviloor Digital Library

the reports of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and to greet the hero who had achieved glorious success in expounding the religion of Vedanta.

"Now let us see in what way the Swami's mind was affected by these grand ovations. We all know how few people can digest the honours bestowed upon them by a whole nation.....But with the Swami Vivekananda the effect was different. After receiving the highest honours from three great nations, Swami Vivekananda's mind was neither elated with pride or self-conceit, nor was his head turned for half-a-second from the Blessed Feet of his beloved Master. With the same child-like simplicity, with the same humility of character which he had possessed before he came to America, and keeping the same fire of renunciation alive in his soul, he realised the transitoriness of all the triumphal honours he received."

Aye, even in the midst of the loudest clamourings of enthusiasm with which he was hailed, his mind was at all times withdrawn into that Silence which is Peace!

Koviloor Digital Library

XCVII.

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION IN THE CITY OF CALCUTTA.

The whole of the Bengal Presidency was alive with enthusiasm ever since the news flashed that the Swami Vivekananda had landed on Indian shores. Calcutta in particular was following with intense interest the movements and utterances of the Swami all along the route of triumph from Colombo to Madras. Save for some jarring notes, though faint and feeble, raised against the Swami and his propaganda by a few Calcutta papers, prompted by sectarianism, orthodoxy, or jealousy, every Bengalee heart throbbed with affectionate pride and patriotism at the thought that they were going to welcome home one who, born and bred among them, had raised their name and nationality in the estimation of the whole civilised world. A Reception Committee was formed, with the Maharajah Bahadur of Darbhanga as President, to receive him officially and to arrange for a huge public reception.

The Swami himself looked forward with eager anticipation to his return to the city of his birth. He left Madras by ship and the voyage was a boon to his tired nerves, for it must be remembered that by this time with continuous ovations and public speaking, and talking to visitors, the Swami was quite worn out physically. To escape further repetitions of the same, which would have been inevitable on his journeying by land, he wisely decided to make the sea-voyage. An amusing incident occurred when before leaving Madras some of his admirers ordered a huge number of cocoanuts to be brought on board, with the milk of which the Swami was to slake his thirst. At this time he was tortured with thirst, the result of the illness he had contracted from severe brain work in the West. Mrs. Sevier

Koviloor Digital Library

on seeing the quantity of cocoanuts brought in boats asked, "Swamiji, is this a cargo boat, then, that they are loading so many cocoanuts aboard?" He replied, very much amused, "Why, no, not at all! They are my cocoanuts! A doctor friend has advised me to drink cocoanut-milk instead of water." He distributed many of the fruits to the captain and fellow-passengers. On the ship were some American Missionaries who much deplored that the English disciples of the Swami had left Christianity for Vedanta, and earnestly expressed the hope that they would eventually return to "the True Faith." In fact, they offered fervent prayers for them that their hearts might be turned back to Christ. When the steamer sailed up the Hoogly, the Swami pointed out to his disciples all the places of interest that he knew so well, and which brought back to his mind the many associations of his early youth and manhood. For hours he spoke with tenderness of Bengal and the Bengalee people, and they saw how much he loved Bengal, the land of his birth.

The Reception Committee at Calcutta had been busy ever since the notice had been received that the Swami had left Madras. Two gentlemen had been despatched by the Committee to inform them of the reception planned. Thus, when the steamer docked at Kidderpore, he found that a special train would be in waiting on the following morning to convey him and his party to the Sealdah Station. At about half-past seven o'clock in the morning the Swami and his party boarded the train and shortly after reached Sealdah Station, Calcutta. Thousands of people had gathered there from very early morning counting the moments as hours until the time for his arrival was at hand. Copies of the two farewell addresses given to the Swami by his students in New York and London were freely distributed and people were seen reading them eagerly. When the whistle of the train was heard, a deafening shout of joy rang out, and the echo, rumbling in the distance, made one feel as though guns were being fired. As soon as the train stopped, Swamiji stood up and bowed to the multitude with joined palms and was greeted with enthusiastic shouts

Koviloor Digital Library

of welcome. On his emerging from the carriage, those that were near him made a rush to take the dust of his feet, and scores who could not approach him, bowed down in what was nothing short of adoration, and shouted his name and that of his Master triumphantly. So dense were the crowds that it was with exceeding difficulty that the Reception Committee headed by Mr. Norendra Nath Sen, the venerable editor of *The Indian Mirror*, could escort the Swami to the carriage that was in waiting for him. And among the masses one noted Sannyâsins, in their *gerruâ* robes, many of them being his own *gurubhâis*. The Swami was literally loaded down with garlands of sweet flowers. He was visibly moved by the tremendous demonstration given in his honour by his own people.

Hardly had the Swami with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, seated themselves in the landau when the horses were unharnessed and a band of fine-looking Bengalee boys, mostly students, rushed forward to draw the carriage. The procession then formed, headed by a band playing lively music, moving in the direction of the Ripon College, its first stopping-place. A *Sankirtana* party followed at some distance in the rear singing religious songs with visible emotion, which lent added interest to the great occasion. All along the line of procession, the streets were decorated with flags and banners, flowers and evergreens. In Circular Road a triumphal arch of welcome had been erected, bearing the inscription: "Hail, Swamiji!" In Harrison Road there was another with the salutation, "Jaya Ramakrishna!" And another still had been constructed in front of the Ripon College bearing the one word "Welcome!" At the College itself there was a wild demonstration. Thousands had flocked thither to get a close view of the great Sannyâsin. Still other thousands pressed towards the College in the line of the procession, until a rush and panic seemed imminent. And one noticed a devout old Brâhmana standing at a distance, bowing his head repeatedly to the Swami and crying out "Shankara," 'Shankara," with tears flowing from his eyes.

Koviloor Digital Library

At the College an informal reception was held, the Swami replying briefly, as the Reception Committee had decided to postpone the official and public reception until a week later, so as to afford the citizens of Calcutta a more favourable opportunity of hearing him. After a short time, therefore, the Swami and his party left for Baghbazar where they had been invited to a banquet by Rai Poshupati Nath Bose at his palatial residence. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the Swami and his European disciples were driven to the beautiful river-side residence of Gopal Lal Seal, in Cossipore, known as the Seal's Garden, which had been offered to the Swami and his friends for their temporary residence.

Immediately, and day after day, and every hour of the day, hundreds of people came to pay their personal respects to the Swami and hear his expositions of Vedanta. Telegrams of congratulation and of welcome, and also invitations from various towns came pouring in. In the day-time he made his headquarters generally at the Cossipore mansion, while at night he was at the Math which was then at Alumbazar. The Swami had no rest. The task of receiving and entertaining countless visitors, and the constant discussion on strenuous intellectual subjects, which such visits entailed, were proving an enormous strain on him. Yet his heart was gladdened at seeing such a sincere spirit of enquiry and religious zeal among his own people, and consequently he was ever ready to welcome them, solve their religious difficulties and point out to them their duties to themselves and to their country.

The day came, the twenty-eighth of February, 1897, and the place chosen for the occasion of the presentation of the City's address of welcome was the palatial residence of Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb Bahadur at Sobha Bazar. When the Swami arrived, he was cordially welcomed by the most distinguished audience that ever assembled in that historic capital of the British Empire in India. At least five thousand people had gathered in the inner quadrangle and verandahs all around, and the cheering which was evoked by his appearance

Koviloor Digital Library

was overwhelming. The meeting was presided over by Raja Binoy Krishna Deb Bahadur, who introduced the Swami as a national figure in the life of India and as a man in a million, a prince among men. There were present Rajahs and Maharajahs and Sannyâsins, a group of distinguished Europeans, many well-known Pandits and illustrious citizens, and hundreds upon hundreds of college students. The address of welcome was presented to the Swami in a silver casket, to which he replied, (See "Complete works," pages 658—665), in a speech that has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory, and of fervent patriotism. His success was spontaneous and immense. When he had finished he became recognised, in an especial sense, as the Prophet of Modern India. He had defined in a new form the whole scope of the Indian Consciousness and had given birth to entirely new conceptions of national and public life. In this address one finds his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, proclaimed by him verily as God Incarnate, and held by him before the nation as the greatest spiritual ideal manifested for the good of our race and of our religion. One finds in this address a call to all that is potential in the Indian character; and certainly he aroused, as it had never been done before, the self-consciousness of the Indian nation. The spirit of this lecture and, above all, the spirit of the Swami himself, with which it throbbed, created the most profound impression,—an impression that has widened and deepened with the years until it has given rise to an entirely New Order in the history of modern India.

Shortly after the Swami's arrival in Calcutta, the day for the public celebration of the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna came round. All along it had been celebrated at Dakshineswar, before and during the Swami's sojourn in the West, but now the fact that the Swami Vivekananda himself was to take part in the festival, drew tens of thousands to the Temple of the Mother.

Accompanied by some of his *gurubhâis* the Swami arrived at the temple-garden at about nine o'clock in the morning.

Kavibar Digital Library

He was barefooted, dressed in a long *âlkhâllâ* and wearing a *gerruâ* turban. The great multitude catching sight of him cried out the name of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda repeatedly. Vast crowds eager to see him and to take the dust of his feet thronged about him and followed him wherever he went. At times it was impossible for him to move. After a while he repaired to the Temple of the Mother, followed by great numbers; there before the Image he prostrated himself, bowing his head to the ground in fervent adoration, and thousands that had swarmed about him did likewise. The scene was inspiring. Emerging from the temple, the Swami next visited the shrine of Sri Radhakantaji, and then entered into Sri Ramakrishna's room, which was full of devotees. Scores of *Sankirtana* parties were everywhere singing and dancing in the name of the Lord. Triumphant shouts of "Jaya Ramakrishna" echoed and re-echoed from thousands of throats from one corner of the vast temple-garden to the other. It seemed as if a huge religious wave swayed the hearts of one and all in that great gathering. As though on a pilgrimage, the Swami visited with great reverence each and every object of religious interest. In company with his European disciples, who had just then come, he walked on towards the memorable Panchavati Tree, the meditation-seat and place of Illumination of the Paramahamsa Deva, reading a hymn to Sri Ramakrishna in Sanskrit, handed to him by the composer, whom he encouraged with his sweet words.

Around the Panchavati, there were scores of devotees of the Great Master, but among them all, the Swami singled out Girish Chandra Ghosh, whom he was wont to address as "Ghoshjâ." The two exchanged greetings, and then the Swami commented to his friend upon the present occasion contrasting it with the former days when only a few people attacted by the unique life of the Divine Master joined in his birthday festival, by remarking, "Well, Ghoshjâ, what a difference between those days and these!" "I know that, but still rises the desire to see more", replied the great

Kovilpur Digital Library

dramatist, in the words of a passage from one of the Epics, meaning thereby that *Bhaktas* ever long to live on, even in the midst of miseries and afflictions, so that they may see greater and greater glories of the *Lilâ*, or Divine Career, of the Lord incarnate. After a short and brilliant conversation with Girish Babu, the Swami turned his steps in the direction of the *Vilva* tree, another scene of the austerities of Sri Ramakrishna.

The great masses that had swarmed to the Dakshineswar temple-gardon, were anxious that the Swami should lecture upon his Master. They called upon him repeatedly to do so and finally he made efforts to speak, but his voice was drowned in the tumult prevailing everywhere. Seeing that it was impossible to make himself heard, he gave up the attempt and mingled with the crowd for some time, exchanging friendly greetings and occasionally introducing his English disciples to distinguished *bhaktas* of his Master. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, when the crowds had partially thinned, he returned to the Alumbazar Math, in company with a *gurubhâi* and a disciple. On the way he talked to the latter on the necessity of religious festivals and other demonstrations of religious zeal and emotion for the general masses who cannot comprehend abstract ideas of Truth.

The Swami was again before the Calcutta public in a lecture he delivered, some short time following upon his public reception, the subject being, "The Vedanta in All Its Phases" (See "Complete Works," pages 666—680). The address was another of those masterpieces of philosophical dissertation which one hears him voice all the way from Colombo to Almora. Taking his stand upon the unassailable ground, that the Vedas and the Upanishads are the basis of all systems of philosophy or religion in India, he touched alternately upon the Sânkhya, Yoga and Ramanuja systems, showing them as classifications of the Vedanta, and maintaining that before Hindus were to be known even as Hindus they were above all to be called "Vedantins." He then spoke concerning the Vedanta as the climax of the systems

Koviloor Digital Library

of philosophy and religion, and exalted the idea of renunciation even to the extreme of asceticism as a great counterbalance to the influx of purely materialistic ideals from the West. And in this lecture, as he did on all occasions, he put before his hearers the glory of the Sanatana Dharma and the all-including and all-reconciling greatness of the Upanishads and Vedanta. Taking them as its fountain-head he felt that Hinduism could be restored to a vigorous life. He denounced all forms of hypocrisy and fanaticism practised in the name of religion and orthodoxy. By drawing a contrast between the degenerating influence of the Vamachara practices of the Tantras and the strengthening and ennobling power of the Upanishadic teachings, he still further intensified the need of exalting the Vedanta, *per se*, above all other systems. *That*, he felt, should be the background of every thing in India. This spirit permeated his entire discourse.

This address created a profound impression in the metropolis. The citizens came to understand more fully now that the Swami stood for the true spirit and the essentials of the Vedic Dharma, and the Pandits discovered that in the Swami they had met with one who was unassailable when he exposed some of their social and religious vagaries as inconsistent with *Shâstric* injunctions. What appealed most to all was, no doubt, the beautiful eclecticism of the Vedanta as presented to them by the Swami and his call to them for Realisation. It was natural, therefore, that additional numbers should flock to him to hear him speak further and in detail of his views.

Koviloor Digital Library

XCVII.

CONVERSATIONS IN THE SEAL'S GARDEN.

During the Swami's stay in Calcutta, though he made his headquarters at the Seal's mansion and the Alumbazar Math alternately by day and night, he was constantly coming and going, as well, from the house of one devotee of Sri Ramakrishna to another. He was entertained frequently by one or other of the princely houses of the metropolis, but he was also to be found as the guest of the most humble followers.

Many distinguished people, and persons of various professions and callings, as well as hundreds of enthusiastic youths and college students used to come daily to the Seal's Garden. Among the former some came to him out of curiosity, some thirsting for knowledge, and others to test his learning and powers. The questioners were invariably charmed with his knowledge and interpretation of the *Shastras*, and even great masters of philosophy and university professors sat amazed before his full-blown genius. It seemed as if the Goddess of Learning was speaking through him, and he often impressed one as possessed of *Yoga* powers and spiritual illumination.

But his heart was with the educated and unmarried youths to whom he was never tired of speaking. He laid great store by them. He appeared to be consumed with the desire of infusing his spirit into them, and train some energetic and strong-bodied young men of good character and religious temperament, who would be ready to devote their lives to the salvation of their own souls and to the good of the world. So it was that they found in him a loving teacher ever ready to do anything for them. It was not always on spiritual subjects that he would talk to them, nor would he always say sweet things to them. He would deplore their physical weakness, he would denounce early marriage among them, he would

Koviloor Digital Library

admonish them for their want of faith in themselves and loss of faith in their national culture and ideals,—but all these he would do with a heart flowing with unmistakable love and kindness, which drew them all the more to him and made some of them gather round him as his staunchest disciples and followers. A few glimpses of the Swami's general conversations and the descriptions of the private meetings in the Seal's Garden and elsewhere as recorded by them, will be interesting and instructive to the readers of his Life, showing the depth and the breadth of his vision and his teachings.

Some followers of the Krishna cult in Bengal, led by the erroneous impression that Swamiji in his zeal for Vedantism did not present before the Western world that other aspect of Hinduism known as *Vaishnavism*, tried during his absence in the West to make the most of this matter in order to belittle his mission in the eyes of his countrymen. But the following from the Swami's own mouth gives a lie direct to it. In the course of an eloquent talk on the *Vaishnava* faith with one of its followers he said, "*Bâbâji*, once I gave a lecture in America on Sri Krishna. It made such an impression on a young and beautiful woman, an heir to immense wealth, that she renounced everything and retired to a solitary island, where she passed her days absorbed in the meditation of Sri Krishna." Speaking of Renunciation to him he remarked, "Slow but sure degradation creeps into those sects which do not practise and preach the spirit of renunciation, as for example,—the Ballabhâchârya Sect."

One day Swamiji was talking with a young man who lived in rooms at the Bengal Theosophical Society. The latter said, "Swamiji, I frequent various sects but cannot decide what is Truth." Swamiji replied in a most affectionate way, "My boy, you need have no fear ; I was also once in the same state as you. Tell me how people of different faiths have instructed you and how you have been following their injunctions". The youth then said that a learned preacher of the Theosophical Society had clearly convinced him of the truth and utility of Image-worship, and that he had accord-

Kovilloor Digital Library

ingly done *puja* and *japam* for a long time with great devotion, but could not find peace. Then some one had advised him to try to make the mind void in times of meditation. He had struggled hard to do so, but still the mind did not become calm and controlled. "Sir", said the young man, "still I sit in meditation, shutting the door of my room, and closing my eyes as long as I can, but I cannot find peace of mind. Can you show me the way ?"

"My boy," spoke the Swami in a voice full of loving sympathy, "if you take my word, you will have first of all to open the door of your room and look around instead of closing your eyes. There are hundreds of poor and helpless people in the neighbourhood of your house,—them you have to serve to the best of your ability. One who is ill and has no one to look after him,—for him you will have to get medicine and diet and nurse him ; one who has nothing to eat,—you will have to feed him ; one who is ignorant,—you will have to teach him, well-educated as you are. My advice to you is, if you want peace of mind, you have to serve others in this way as best as you can."

But the questioner now began to argue saying, "But suppose, Sir, if in going to nurse a patient I myself fall ill by keeping up nights and not taking my meals in time, and by having to undergo such other irregularities——!" Swamiji now became vexed with his words and said rather tauntingly "Why, boy, it is quite evident from your words and manners to every one present here, that people like you who are so mindful of their own bodily comforts, will never go out of their way to nurse the sick risking their health !"

Another day, in course of a conversation, a distinguished disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, a veteran professor, asked him, "What you talk of service, charity, and doing good to the world,—those are, after all, in the domain of Maya. When, according to Vedanta, the goal of man is the attainment of Mukti and the breaking of all the bondage of Maya, what is the use of your preaching those things which bring the mind down to mundane matters ?'

Koviloor Digital Library

Without a moment's hesitation Swamiji replied, "Is not the idea of Mukti also in the domain of Maya? Does not the Vedanta teach that the Atman is *ever-free*? What is striving for *Mukti* to the Atman, then?"

The talented questioner remained silent, unable to refute those words of wisdom. According to his understanding, *Bhakti Yoga*, meditation and aspiring to reach *Mukti* by shutting oneself up from and becoming dead to the world was spirituality, while the rest, even *Karma Yoga*, was all Maya. He little thought that from the highest standpoint both are equally meaningless, unreal,—Maya, and that for striving souls both are absolutely necessary in certain stages of progress. One cannot exclude the one without excluding the other, aye, without breeding narrowness, selfishness and conceit,—the great stumbling blocks in the path of spirituality. Swamiji's sharp intellect and his broad heart and all-inclusive spirit could not bear such misconception of truth, and he knocked it on the head knowing that that was the prevailing idea about Vedanta which had wrought incalculable evil in the land of his birth.

Having the nation at his feet, with name and fame and wealth heaped upon him, Swami Vivekananda was the same simple Sannyâsin as of old, untouched by pride and conceit. One day, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramlal Chattopadhyaya, or Ramlal Dada as he is endearingly called by the Brotherhood, came to see him. Swamiji at once got up and offered Ramlal Dada the chair. Ramlal Dada out of humility and regard, and also feeling disconcerted at taking the Swami's chair in the presence of the numerous visitors, asked Swamiji to resume his seat, but he would not hear of it. After much persuasion he made him sit in the chair and strolled about the room saying to himself गुरुवत् गुरुपुत्रेषु "One should treat the relations of the Guru with the same honour as he would treat the Guru himself." This incident, though a simple one, was a lesson in *gurubhakti* to those who witnessed it.

In these days Swamiji had varying moods as visitors of different temperaments came to him for guidance. On one

Koviloor Digital Library

occasion some one knowing Swamiji's regard for "The Imitation of Christ" and its saintly author, in the days of the Baranagore Math, referred to the wonderful humility which pervaded the teachings of that classical work, and observed that spiritual progress was impossible without one's thinking oneself as the lowest of the low. Swamiji exclaimed, "Why should we think ourselves as low and give away to feelings of self-reproach? Where is darkness for us! We are verily the sons of Light! We live and move and have our being in the Light which lighteth the whole universe!"

Once discoursing on the subject of conquering lust, Swamiji mentioned a personal instance which gives a hint as to what lengths he had himself gone rather than submit to the lower nature. In the course of the talk he said that so long as the mind be not absorbed in God, external means, such as wearing *Kaupina*, are of little avail. But until one does not reach that state, one has to discriminate always and practise control by taking their aid. "In the days of my youth," he said, "once I was so much troubled with a fit of passion that I became terribly vexed with myself, and in my rage sat upon a pot of burning charcoal that was near. It took many days to heal the wound!"

An enquirer one day asked Swamiji, what was the difference between an *Avatâra* and a *Muktapurusha*. Without giving a direct answer to the question, he said, "My conclusion is, that *Videhamukti* is the highest stage. When I used to roam about all over India in my Sâdhanâ stage, I passed days and days in solitary caves in meditation, and have many a time decided to give up the body by starvation, seeing that I could not attain Mukti. But now I have no desire for Mukti. I think that so long as one single individual in the universe remains without attaining it I do not care for my own Mukti!"

These words of unbounded love to all beings remind one of the similar utterance of the Lord Buddha. But it must be remembered that both these great teachers of humanity could only speak like that when they had themselves become

Koviloor Digital Library,

illumined and free, and that only Prophets of God and Saviours of mankind can challenge Mukti in that manner. Aye, there is the difference between the *Avatara*,—or one Who having Mukti in the palm of His hand, as it were, does not want to be merged in the Absolute or to be in His own essence as God Himself, but lives in the world for doing good to others, trying to raise others to the highest state,—and the *Muktapanesha*, or the *Videhamakta*, that is, one who roams about the world as a freed soul with his mind always absorbed in God, or one who wants to be merged in the Absolute, giving up his body in Samadhi.

It was in the house of Sri Priya Nath Mukherjee that being asked by the Editor of "The Indian Mirror," he pointed out the supreme need and the far-reaching significance of his Mission of preaching Vedanta in the West, and convinced him that the other methods of raising the motherland, such as politics, were but secondary. After the distinguished visitor had left, Swamiji had a conversation with a preacher of the Cow Protection Society, which brings out in bold relief his love for his fellow-beings and his patriotism. The conversation is recorded in the "Book of Dialogues" by his disciple, Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarti B. A., and is well worth reproducing here.

Swamiji: What is the aim of your Association?

Preacher: We save our Gomâtâs *(cows regarded as Mother)* from the hands of the butchers by buying them, and have established *Pinjrapoles* (refuges) where old, diseased and disabled cows are taken care of.

Swamiji: That is an excellent idea. What is the source of your income?

Preacher: The work is managed by funds given in charity by high-souled persons like you.

Swamiji: What funds have you?

Preacher: The trading community of Marwaris are the chief supporters and patrons of the Society. They have helped it with large contributions of money.

Swamiji: A terrible famine has been raging in Central India. The Government of India have published a report computing the deaths

Koviloor Digital Library

from starvation at 900,000. Has your Society done anything to save the starving people from the jaws of death?

Preacher: We do not help in famines and the like. Our object is to save the Gomâtâs only.

Swamiji: When lakhs and lakhs of your own countrymen and co-religionists were succumbing to this dreadful famine, you did not think it your duty to help these miserable creatures, by giving them a morsel of food?

Preacher: No. As the result of their own Karma—for their own sins—such famine occurred. They have only suffered for their own Karma.

Hearing these words Swamiji's face flushed and his eyes glared at the speaker. But suppressing his emotions he exclaimed: "Sir, I have no sympathy with such bodies which do not feel for man, which seeing before their eyes thousands of their famished brothers perishing from starvation do not care to save them by offering even a morsel of food but spend millions of money for the protection of birds and beasts. I do not believe any public good, worth the name, can come out of such bodies. 'Men are dying for their Karma, so let them die!' Are you not ashamed to make such a cruel statement? If you make the plea of the doctrine of Karma in that way, then there is no need of any endeavour to do good to others. It may be equally applied also to your work,—the gomâtâs fall into the hands of the butchers and are slaughtered by them for their own Karma in this or in some past lives, and so there is no need of our doing anything for them!"

The preacher feeling thoroughly discomfitted said, "Of course what you say is true, but our Shâstras say, 'The Cow is our mother.'"

Amused at these words Swamiji said, "Yes, that cow is your mother I can very well understand. Otherwise who else will bring forth talented sons like you!"

Perhaps this biting joke was lost upon this up-country preacher, for he without making any remark now asked Swamiji for some contribution. He replied, "I am a Sannyâsin, as you see. If people give me money I shall first of all spend it in the service of man. I shall try to save men first by making provision to give them food, education and religion. If after spending money on these things there be any left, I shall give something out of it to your Society."

After the preacher had left Swamiji said addressing those that were with him, "What nonsense that man spoke! 'What is the use of helping those who are dying for their own Karma!' That is the way by which the country has gone to rack and ruin. Did you see to what a monstrous extreme your doctrine of Karma is dragged! Alas, are they men who have no heart to feel for man!..." As he spoke, his whole body shook with grief and disgust.

Koviloor Digital Library

In speaking of these conversations and dialogues one does not know where to end. They constitute an inspiring message for young India, surcharged with his unbounded love for his country, his fellowmen and his religion. And nothing did the Swami preach in India with greater emphasis as the idea of strength. "Strength, strength is the one word," as he had said in one of his Madras lectures, "that every line of the Upanishads declares unto me." To make every Indian conscious of that infinite power of the Spirit lying potential in every man, he regarded as the foremost mission of his life, as in the wake of it was sure to follow everything that made religion dynamic, life-giving, man-making. Talking one day to a disciple he said :—

"It is rebellion against Nature, struggle for self-preservation that differentiates Spirit from Matter. Where there is life there is struggle, there is the manifestation of the Spirit. Read the history of all nations and you will find that that is the Law. It is only this nation which drifts with Nature and you are more dead than alive. You are in a hypnotised state. For the last thousand years or more, you are told that you are weak, you are nobodies, you are good for nothing and so on, and you have come to believe yourselves as such. This body of mine was also born and bred on the Indian soil, but I have never for a moment allowed such baneful ideas to enter my mind. I had tremendous faith in myself. It is only for that, by the grace of the Lord, that those of all others who look down upon us as weak and low, regard me as their teacher. If you have the same faith in yourselves as I had, if you can believe that in you is infinite power, unbounded wisdom, indomitable energy, if you can rouse that power in yourselves you will be like me, you will do wonders. You will say, 'Where is that strength in us to be able to think like that, and where are the teachers to tell us not of weakness but of strength and rouse in us that faith?' It is to teach you of that and to show you by my example that I have come to you. From me you must learn and realise that truth, and then go from town to town, from village to village, from door to door, and scatter the idea broadcast. Go and tell every Indian, 'Arise, awake and dream no more! Rouse thyself and manifest the Divinity within!' There is no want, there is no misery that you cannot remove by the consciousness of the power of the Spirit within. Believe in these words and you will be omnipotent....."

It was at the house of Sri Priya Nath Mukherjee on the occasion alluded to above that Sarat Chandra Chakravarti,

Koviloor Digital Library

the recorder of conversations with the Swami, met him. An orthodox Brahmana and a staunch Vedantin, he had sat at the feet of Nag Mahashaya, the famous devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. His two volumes of *Swami Sishya Samvad* or "The Dialogues between the Swami and His Disciple" in Bengali, compiled from his diaries, record his valuable conversations and afford a great insight into the Swami's personality and teachings and his plans of work, especially for India. At their very first meeting the Swami spoke to him in Sanskrit, and taking him apart addressed him with that memorable Sloka of the "Vivekachudamani" of Shankaracharya which runs thus :—

मा भैष्ट विद्वन् तव नास्त्यपायः
संसारसिन्धोस्तरणेऽस्त्युपायः ।
येनैव याता यतयोऽस्य पारं
तमेव मार्गं तव निर्दिशामि ॥

"Fear not, O wise one, there is no death for thee. There is a way of crossing the ocean of Samsara. That very path by which the self-controlled sages have reached to the other side of its shore, I shall point out to thee."

Later on, the Swami resumed his discourse with Sarat Chandra and said, reading his mind, as it were, "Come to me one night, we shall talk then on Vedanta." What puzzled this disciple was, that the Swami should have made Vedantins of Europeans ; he could not believe that they really understood Vedanta, and so he had asked him, how being non-observers of Shastric rites and injunctions, especially as regards food and daily duties, and without passing through the fourfold Sadhanas, they could possibly gain a knowledge and insight of the highest Vedic truth. The Swami replied, "Talk with them and you shall see that they are true Vedantins."

Wheresoever he went the Swami was pressed with questions and invariably his answers threw new light upon Indian culture and philosophy ; and those who had come, left with a new consciousness of the Vedanta, not only metaphysical but mystical as well. It was his practical Vedanta mysticism which carried his hearers away. And wheresoever he went

Koviloor Digital Library

he also made every effort to introduce the idea of the universality of the Vedanta in its acceptance of all persons, irrespective of nationality, or caste, or creed, so that the rigidly orthodox Hindus could come to look upon his European disciples with him at the time, and also those in Europe and America, as verily their own brothers and the children of the Sanatana Dharma. Every day he was busy breaking down the prevailing caste barriers in the thought of Hinduism, showing the synthesis and the historic character of the original *Châturvarnya* system and the idea of *Jati*, and their tendency in assimilating all conditions of human life.

At the Seal's Garden and at the Alumbazar Math hundreds came and left with a broadened vision of the Dharma, and with the sense of the highest liberalism in the intensest forms of orthodoxy. Learned Pandits came to test him on his knowledge of the Vedanta philosophy and even to vanquish him on his own ground if they could, but they were generally brought round to the Swami's point of view. An incident of this character took place at the Seal's Garden in Cossipore. Hearing of his name,—by this time a household word in all India—a group of Gujerati Pandits, well versed in the Vedas and the Darshanas, approached him for the purpose of having a discussion on the Shastras. Thinking that the Swami, because of his several years' stay in the West, had lost his fluency in Sanskrit, they were anxious to put him to confusion, and commenced their discourse with him in that classic language. The Swami replied in a calm and dignified way to their excited arguments, speaking all the while the purest Sanskrit. Those present,—and later on, in fact, even the Pandits,—acknowledged that his Sanskrit was even sweeter and more recherché than that spoken by themselves. His own *gurubhais* marvelled at the readiness with which he spoke, seeing that for years he had no practice in that difficult language. Only once did he err, using the word "*Asti*" for "*Svasti*." Immediately the Pandits laughed out and created an uproar making much of this trifling matter. The Swami corrected himself at once, saying, "I am the

Koviloor Digital Library

servant of the Pandits. May they allow this mistake to be overlooked !" The Pandits were charmed with this expression of true humility.

The subjects of the discussion were numerous and varied, but the main topic was the respective position of the Purva and the Uttara Mimamsa. The Swami supported the Uttara Mimamsa, and with such power of logic and language that the Pandits themselves admitted the superiority of the Jnana-kanda. As they left, they remarked to a group of the Swami's admirers that though, perhaps, he had not a thorough mastery over Sanskrit grammar, he was undoubtedly a seer of the inmost spirit of the Shâstras over which he has an extraordinary command. "In discussion he is unique," they said, "and the way in which he summarises his ideas and refutes those of his opponents is wonderful. Marvellous are his intellectual gifts." And talking among themselves about Swamiji, someone heard them saying, "Swamiji is not what we should call a great Sanskrit scholar. But he has a peculiar fascinating power in his eyes, and it is by this power that he must have won victory and success and gained adherents all over the world." Yes, that fascinating power of the eyes was irresistible and overpowering and indeed undefinable. Whence did it come?—not from mere learning, not from mere physical beauty—but from the leading of the life of wonderful Sadhanas and renunciation and unbroken Brahmacharyam, and the blossoming of these into the supreme realisation of the Atman.

When the Pandits had gone, the Swami remarked that, though they were very learned, they were ill-bred, and that in the West such conduct as they manifested would not be tolerated. "The civilised society in the West," he said, "take the spirit in an argument and never seek to pick holes in the language of an opponent, or make fun of a grammatical mistake on his part, leaving aside the thread of the subject matter. But our Pandits losing sight of the spirit quibble over the letter of the Dharma. They fight over the husks and blinded by argumentative spirit do not see the kernel

Koviloor Digital Library

of the corn." Even before he left India for the West the Swami exhibited, on many occasions, his dissatisfaction with "these metaphysical quibblers." "They are like the dog chasing its own tail," he said, "and never come to the point. They lose sight altogether of the relationship of ideas to the practical living of life under changing circumstances, and rest content with following in the old ruts and running after metaphysical illusions."

What a love the *gurubhâis* of Swamiji bore to him! While the discussion was going on, the Swami Ramakrishnananda was seen sitting apart in meditation posture, counting his beads. He was praying with his whole heart to the Lord, as he said later on, so that Swamiji might come out victorious in the discussion.

Another interesting occurrence of this time was the visit of two gentlemen who came with Mr. Priya Nath Sinha to ask the Swami some questions on *Prânâyâma*, which had been raised in their minds by reading the ideas he had laid down in his celebrated work, "Raja Yoga." Taking offerings with them, they approached him. Swamiji at once recognised one of them as having been a fellow-student of his, and made them sit by him. After replying to a few questions put by some of the other visitors, he himself began to speak on the subject of *Prânâyâma* without being asked. First of all he explained through modern science the origin of matter from mind, and by drawing contrasts between the laws of matter and of mind, showed the action and reaction of thought on form, and *vice versa*. He then went on to elucidate what *Prânâyâma* really was. From three o'clock in the afternoon until seven in the evening, the discourse continued. From what they heard from him that day, it seemed to them that only a very little part of the knowledge that was in him of Yoga had been given out in his book called "Raja Yoga." They felt also that what he said was not mere book-learning, but proceeded from his own realisation. What astounded the questioners most, however, was that how could the Swami have known that they had come to him to inquire about *Prânâyâma*, and

Koviloor Digital Library

how he answered many of their queries by himself before they were even put to him, he, as it were, reading their minds and anticipating the very mention of their difficulties. In course of a conversation on a subsequent day elsewhere when Mr. Sinha informed Swamiji about it. he replied, "Similar incidents happened many times in the West, and people often used to ask me how I could know the questions that were agitating their minds." The talk then drifted on to the subjects of thought-reading and the remembering of past births, and various other "Yoga powers" were touched upon. In this connection, one of the party asked him outright, "Well, Swamiji, do you know your own past births?" Instantly he made answer, "Yes, I do." And when they pressed him to lift the curtain of the Past, so that they might see *who he was* in other lives, he said, "I *can* know them, - I *do* know them,— but I prefer not to say anything on the point." And he was right, for he felt that mere curiosity should not be the motive, even if spiritual, prompting a demand for such a revelation.

During the very period when this conversation took place, there occurred what might be termed "an instance" of the Swami's Yoga power. Indeed, he often impressed one as being possessed of higher Yoga power and sight. One evening together with the Swami Premananda he was seated in a room, conversing in an ordinary way, when suddenly he became strangely silent. After a while he said to his *guru-bhâi*, "Did you see anything?" and received an answer in the negative. Then he told that he had just seen a *bhoot*, or ghost, with his head severed from the body, beseeching him with an agonising look to relieve him of his miserable state. On inquiry it was found that in that very garden-house, many years ago, a Brahmana *durwan* who was accustomed to lend money at high rates of interest, had had his throat cut by a debtor and his body thrown in the Ganges. There were several other times when the Swami was visited by similar apparitions, and on such occasions he would raise his heart in prayer for their deliverance and send his thought to them in earnest benediction.

Kovilaor Digital Library

XCIX.

RECONSTITUTION OF THE ORDER AND INITIATION OF DISCIPLES.

It goes without saying that the main interest of the Swami's stay in Calcutta centred round the monastery which was then located at Alumbazar near Dakshineswar. No words can describe the joy of the monks of Ramakrishna when they found "their beloved Noren" again in their midst after many years of separation. Memories of the olden days were revived. The days with the Master and the innumerable experiences of the *parivrâjaka* life of each were recalled; and the Swami entertained his *gurubhâis* and the *bhaktas* of the Lord with hundreds of tales and episodes of his life and work in "the dim and distant West." He liberalised their social notions, bit by bit, making them accept his European disciples in the Brotherhood. In the beginning most of them were extremely orthodox and diffident as to mixing with the Westerners. Gradually this was overcome, and the Swami had the satisfaction of seeing his *gurubhais* entertaining his disciples from across the seas as their kith and kin. Finally, all scrupulousness was overcome, and the Brethren, realising that the Westerners were Westerners in name only and had really become Hinduised, aye, Brahmanised, even ate with those whom they as orthodoxists had previously regarded as "Mlechchhas."

The life of the Swami Vivekananda was, indeed, a chain of triumphs. But the greatest of his triumphs was the converting of his *gurubhâis* from an individualistic outlook on religion to his nationalising ideas of religious life in which public spirit and service to fellowmen occupied a prominent place. Formerly the ideal of the Math Brothers was, mainly, the striving for personal Mukti and Realisation of the Supreme Atman by severe Tapas and meditation, remaining as much

Koviloor Digital Library

as possible aloof from the world and its cares and sorrows. This was and is, no doubt, the prevailing Hindu idea, sanctified by tradition and sanctioned by the sages and seers from the Vedic period down to the present day. According to it everything is Mâyâ, which binds the soul down to the body and creates desires which cause rebirth. One who aspires for Realisation must discard everything by the "*Neti Neti*" process, by discriminating everything as being *not* the Atman. Whatever takes away the mind from the contemplation of the Supreme,—even doing good to others, preaching religion, and so on,—is unreal, from which the individual soul should keep itself aloof, especially the Sannyâsin. This was mainly the idea also of the Swami's *gurubhâis*, almost without exception, and they had hitherto been following it with great spiritual ardour ; only they made allowance in their leader's case, he being spoken of by Sri Ramakrishna as an *Achâryakôti* and *Nityasiddha*, a messenger of God to humanity.

But with the appearance of Swamiji among them at this stage, a new order of things was brought into existence. He fired at them,—as he had done again and again in his epistles to them from the West—for the insufficiency of their faith in themselves and in the great mission of the Master, for not forming themselves into an organised active body, and for not going out to preach the gospel of salvation to others. He charged them to do away with all such selfish motives as one's own personal Mukti, and work their life out in educating and raising the masses in India. He appealed to their higher nature, calling them spiritual lions, each capable of moving the world, if only they roused the powers lying latent in them. The time demands it, he said, that they should carry the new light unto others, that they should themselves show by their example how to serve the poor, the helpless and the diseased, seeing God in them, and inspire others to do the same. They have henceforth to worship the Lord not in temples and chapels alone, but in the *Virât* as residing in all souls. For the good of their religion and their country, they have to come out of their caves and cells and send rays of cheer and

Koviloor Digital Library

hope into the dark recesses of millions of hearts rent and laid low by want, misery and ignorance. The mission of his life, he said, was to create a new order of Sannyâsins in India, who would fling away their own Mukti and would go to hell, if needed, in order to be of help and service to others. Would they do this in the name of one who took human form "for the good of the Many, for the happiness of the Many ?"

The proposition, though grand and inspiring, was to them too revolutionary and staggering. How could they suddenly change at another's bidding the dearest religious outlook and ideal to which they had given their lives, for one which apparently went against their whole nature and training ? But, on the other hand, their unbounded love and faith in their *gurubhâi*, unique in the annals of religious brotherhoods, would not allow them to stand in opposition to him. Some were readily turned to his ways of thinking. Others had to be convinced by argument before they could reconcile themselves to his ideas, for did not their Master himself enjoin them to seek God first, by prayer, meditation, worship and Yoga ? With them the struggle was hard and long. But who could resist the Swami ? He bore down all their preconceived notions by the overwhelming power of his brilliant intellect and his keen insight into the teachings and mission of Sri Ramakrishna's life, no less by his burning love and passionate appeal to them. He interpreted his Master's teachings in a new light in consonance with his proposition, and showed that their supreme duty lay in the fulfilment of their Master's mission, in the bringing in of a new era of religious rejuvenescence, and this could not be accomplished until the masses were raised, until Vedanta was made practical, until the life-giving ideas of the Master were sown broadcast all over the world. Will they shrink from such a glorious task, from such a rare privilege, for the paltry consideration of their own Mukti ? Such selfish ideas, he pointed out, were unworthy of those who believed themselves to be the favoured disciples of an Avatara—for had not their Mukti been already assured by the very fact of it ? They have now to arouse

Koviloor Digital Library

and awake others to reach the Goal. That is, said Swamiji, the mission entrusted to them by Sri Ramakrishna through him.

So on and on, and on many an occasion did the Swami speak with a fervour which sent a thrill through their souls. Still there were some of his brother-disciples who, though thoroughly convinced of the force and soundness of the argument intellectually, could not bring themselves to fully supersede their ingrained ideals with new ones, but out of their profound faith in their leader they bowed their heads in acquiescence, knowing his voice to be the voice of their Master. Thus one and all girded up their loins, in the end, to do anything and to go anywhere, for the good of their fellowmen, at the bidding of the Swami.

As the first fruit of this singular self-abandonment, one whose whole life and soul had been indissolubly merged, as it were, in the ceremonial worship of the Master unremittingly for twelve years, who in the performance of that duty, which he did with unparalleled devotion, never left the precincts of the Math even for a single day,—the Swami Ramakrishnananda—went out to Madras at the behest of Swamiji to open a centre there for propagating the teachings of the Vedanta in Southern India ! So had been the case with the Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda, who had gone over to the West at the call of Swamiji to help him in the work there. And full of the same spirit Swami Akhandananda, went out, and seeing people dying from starvation in the Murshidabad district started famine-relief work there. It may be said here to his credit, that this impulse to be of service to his fellowmen had seized his soul first among all the *gurubhâis* of Swamiji even as early as 1894 when he was in Khetri. He is seen then seeking the approval of his intention of opening schools for the spread of education among the masses, by corresponding with the leader and his brother-disciples. The passionate words of Swamiji spoken to the Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda, whom he met at Mount Abu Road Station just prior to his leaving for the West, had roused the Swami Akhandananda, some

Kovilloor Digital Library

months after he had heard them from the two *gurubhâis*, making him keen to work for the improvement of the backward condition of his countrymen. And those words were: "I have now travelled all over India, and lately in the Maharashtra country and the Western Coasts. But, alas! it was an agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears! It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason,—to find some means for the salvation of the poor of, India—that I am now going to America!" To return, however, to our immediate subject. As regards his other *gurubhâis*, they were ready now to open and take up in the near future any work of religious and philanthropic utility launched by the Swami as occasion demanded, or in the furtherance of his ideas and plans of work in India and abroad. Thus gradually came into existence the various monastic centres and *Sevashramas*, or Homes of Service, and relief-works in times of plague, famine and flood under the charge and with the co-operation of his *gurubhâis* and his disciples. This, in short, is the real genesis of the inception of that great movement subsequently known as the Ramakrishna Mission. But of this later on.

Since his arrival in Calcutta the increased strain upon his nerves and person brought on by the multifarious demands and activities in the approaching heat of the plains was too much for the Swami. Prominent physicians advised him to take complete rest at once, and not to devote himself to any serious thought or occupation; but at this very time, he was most busy with plans. Now it was a monastery in the Himalayas, then the removal of the Math to a healthy site, then the purchasing of a place on the bank of the Ganges, which would be the permanent headquarters of the Order, then the founding of a religious and philanthropic organisation to be known as the Ramakrishna Mission, then the training of his own disciples and giving instruction to the

Koviloor Digital Library

hundreds of persons that came to him. Besides all these things which engaged his serious attention, his thoughts were with his two *gurubhais* who were doing excellent work in America and England respectively. And from both these countries he was receiving numerous letters asking his advice and praying for his speedy return to the West, where "still larger opportunities" were opening up for him.

Knowing only too well that it would be wise to heed the admonitions of the doctors, the Swami had to relinquish his idea of working in Calcutta and visiting other parts of India for the present, and left on invitation for Darjeeling whither Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had preceded him. He was joined by the Swamis Brahmananda, Trigunatita, Jnanananda, Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh, Mr. Goodwin, Dr. Turnbull, and Messrs. Alasingha Perumal, G. G. Narasimhacharya and Singaravelu Mudalier, who either accompanied him at the time, or else followed him a few days later. The three last-named were his devoted Madrasi disciples of the olden days, who came with the Swami and his party from Madras to Calcutta and lived with him at the Math. In Darjeeling all became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Bannerjee who were only too glad to lavish their hospitality on them. Through the generosity of the Maharajah of Burdwan, who revered the Swami greatly, a portion of his residence known as "Rose Bank" was also placed at the Swami's disposal for some time.

The Swami now gave himself up to complete rest, journeying now and then along the mountain paths, visiting a Buddhist monastery in the neighbourhood, rejoicing in the glorious associations of the Himalayas, conversing on light topics with his friends, and often passing into hours of silent meditation. During those several weeks' sojourn in Darjeeling, the mind of the reader is diverted for the time being from the public glare in which the Swami constantly lived, and in this quiet one pauses to come closer to his personality and to know him intimately as the monk, the teacher, and the ascetic of the old *parivrâjaka* days.

While the Swami was the guest at the residence of

Koviloor Digital Library

Mr. M. N. Banerjee, two incidents occurred which gives one a glimpse of his Yoga powers. There was then living with the family, Motilal Mukherjee, who later became the Swami Sachchidananda. At this time he was suffering from high fever which brought on delirium. Swamiji out of sympathy just touched his head and it got cool at once, and the restless patient came to the normal state. The same person was likewise a *Bhakta* of the emotional type, and often in the course of *Sankirtana* fell into trances of a wild form of ecstasy. He would, in that state, cry and groan and roll on the ground beating his hands and feet against it. Swamiji thinking it best to divert his spiritual tendencies, one day touched him at the heart. Thenceforwards the whole religious temperament of the man was changed and he became an Advaitin devoting himself to the study and practice of Jnana Yoga! Needless to say, he was no longer visited by trance experience.

With the exception of a flying visit to Calcutta to receive the Rajah of Khetri, who had come all the way from Rajputana to see him after his return from the West, the Swami had succeeded in freeing himself from the work and worry of life in the plains and was happy in his Darjeeling retreat. On the occasion of the Rajah's visit, the Prince had been sumptuously entertained in the monastery at Alumbazar, and the Swami had held a long discourse with him pertaining to the mission of Hinduism. Rajah Ajit Singh and several other ruling princes intended to start shortly for England. The former tried hard to induce the Swami to go over with them, but the doctors would not hear of his undertaking any physical or mental labour just then.

Speaking generally, the Swami's health was very bad, though just at this time he felt somewhat restored to the vigour and strength he formerly possessed. The disease which afflicted him was peculiar in this, that at times he felt quite himself and then again would experience a violent reaction. He was cautioned not to exert himself even to the extent of reading, and especially he was not to engage himself in

Kovilpur Digital Library

any deep or serious thought. His friends and physicians were exceedingly nervous concerning him, as it was found that he would exert himself, otherwise life would have become a frightful bore to him. To him, to be idle was worse than death.

When he had remained some time in the hill-station, some pressing business made him return to Calcutta. Then, too, he was anxious to try Almora for his health, where he could have more complete retirement. It was his intention, however, to remain in the metropolis for some two weeks in order to supervise and settle certain important matters before leaving for Almora.

The Swami was nowhere happier than when he was at the monastery where he could enjoy the freedom of the monk among his beloved *gurubhais* and his devoted disciples. At this time there were several educated young men who joined the Math, being prompted to adopt the life of the Brahmachârin, receiving their inspiration from the Swami's stirring words concerning absolute *Vairagyam*. He trained them for future work by giving constant instructions, and holding classes at the Math on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the Vedanta. Already there had gathered, during the years of his absence from the Brotherhood, several young men at the Math, who led the life of Brahmacharyam. They were anxious to receive initiation as Sannyasins from Swamiji himself. For several years they had lived under the supervision of the elder members of the monastery ; and the Swami, knowing by intuition that they were worthy, consented to make them his own disciples. In regard to one of the four, however, who were to receive admission into the Sannyas Ashrama, the elder members raised serious objections because of his past life. This roused the Swami to the reply, "What do you say ! If *we* shrink to uplift sinners, who else will uplift them ? Besides, the very fact that one has taken refuge in the Math wishing to lead a higher life, shows that his intentions are good and we must help such an one. And even if one is bad and perverted, and you cannot change his character, then why

Koviloor Digital Library

have you taken the *gerrua* cloth ?—why have you assumed the role of teachers ?" Needless to say, Swamiji's wish prevailed at last.

The Brahmacharins about to be formally initiated into Sannyas, became known respectively as the Swamis Virajananda, Nirbhayananda, Prakashananda and Nityananda. Of them the first-named had joined the Math in 1891, the next two much later, and the last, who was much older than Swamiji, just before return to India. The initiation ceremony was one of the most important events which delighted the Swami as none of the huge ovations in his honour had done. On the day previous, the novices shaved their heads and after a bath in the Ganges put on white clothing, and making obeisance to the Swami and receiving his blessings, performed sacred obsequies in honour of their ancestors. They also performed their own *Shrâddha* services according to the Shâstras, offering the *pindas* at their own feet, it being understood that from the time one becomes a Sannyasin, one has no longer any claim to Vedic and other ceremonial rites of the "twice-born" castes, as he is supposed to be henceforth beyond all caste-ideas. He should be above all desires of enjoyment either in this life or in the next. He is no longer the body, he is no longer the son of So-and-so, his Sadhana being to forget entirely the body-consciousness, and all its past connections. The *Shrâddha* ceremony was presided over, at Swamiji's command, by a devout Brahman follower of his as the priest, whom he enjoined to be scrupulous in the proper observances of the Vedic rites appertaining thereto. Swamiji graced the occasion now and then with his presence, when the *mantrams* were being chanted. At the close of the ceremony when the Brahmacharins returned after consigning their respective *Shrâddha* offerings to the Ganges, the Swami addressed them with "words of fire", and said to those present, "Now they are dead to the Samsara; from to-morrow they will be clothed with a new body, with new thoughts and purposes, and with a new robe; and they will live like a

Koviloor Digital Library

living fire, kindled by that Power which is Brahman. 'Neither by wealth, nor by progeny, but by renunciation alone Immortality is reached.' " When they had saluted his feet, the Swami blessed them and uttered the words, "You have decided to take up the highest vow of human life. Blessed is your birth, blessed is the one who gave you birth, blessed is your ancestry !"

After the evening meal on that day, the Swami spoke of nothing but the glories of Renunciation, his eyes emitting fire, as it were, and his words of power infusing the strength of a hundred lions. The discourse, owing to its lengthiness, forbids reproduction here. Swamiji concluded with saying : "Remember, for the salvation of one's own soul and for the good and the happiness of the Many, the Sannyâsin is born in the world. To sacrifice his own life for others, to alleviate the misery of millions rending the air with their cries, to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow, to console the heart of the bereaved mother, to provide the ignorant and the depressed masses with the ways and means for the struggle for existence and make them stand on their own feet, to preach broadcast the teachings of the Shâstras to one and all without distinction, for their material and spiritual welfare, to rouse the sleeping lion of Brahman in the hearts of all beings by the diffusion of the light of Knowledge,—the Sannyâsin is born in the world !" And turning to his *gurubhais* he exclaimed : "Remember, it is for the consummation of this purpose in life that we have taken our birth and shall lay down our lives for it. Arise, awake yourselves, and arouse and awake others, fulfil your mission in life and you will reach the highest Goal !" Verily, in these three sentences the Swami has laid down the whole scope and ideal of the Ramakrishna Order of monks !

It is impossible to describe the Swami when he initiated his disciples as Sannyâsins. His face would beam with power and the glory of renunciation, and a spiritual exultation would pervade his whole personality. And at such moments he would transmit to them, by the magic of his

Koviloor Digital Library

words, some of his own spirit and power. He would eloquently dwell on the essentials of building up the religious life. He would point out what a one-pointed devotion to the ideal, what an unshaken faith in the Guru and a spirit of absolute obedience to his commands are needed in order to realise the highest stages of spirituality. "And who is entitled to be the Guru to whom such faith and obedience would be due?" "He who is the knower of Brahman, he who out of mercy destroys all the mental ills and afflictions of the disciple, he who takes him across the sea of Samsâra to the regions of light and bliss!" As on the one hand he would paint before his disciples in vivid colours the incomparable greatness of the Sannyâsin life and its ideals, he would, equally on the other hand, draw their attention to its austere vows and rigid demands. He would charge them saying : "You must renounce everything. You must not seek pleasure or comfort for yourself. All attachment will have to be cut into pieces and cast aside. You must look upon lust and gold as poison, name and fame as the vilest filth, glory as the terrible hell, pride of birth or position as sinful as drinking wine. Being the teacher of your fellowmen and devoted to the Self within, you have to pass your life with a view to the freedom of the Self and for the good of the world. Can you strive with your whole soul to do these things? Take this path only after serious reflection. There is yet time to return to the old life. Are you ready to implicitly obey my orders? If I ask you to face a tiger or a venomous snake, if I ask you to jump into the Ganges and catch a crocodile, or if I want to sell you to work the rest of your life in a tea-garden in Assam as a coolie, or if I order you to starve yourselves to death or burn yourselves in a slow fire, thinking that it will be for your good, are you ready to obey me instantly?" Being thus spoken to, the four Brahmachârins on the present occasion implied their assent by bowing their heads in silence. He then duly initiated them into the Sannyâs Ashrama by making them perform the Virâja Homa, by which before the blazing sacrificial Fire

Koviloor Digital Library

they took the solemn vow of renouncing everything in the three worlds and invoked the aid of the Supreme to purify their souls and every function of their bodies, so that they might henceforth be, like the living fire before them, sinless and taintless and clothed with light. This was indeed an occasion of ecstatic illumination, and for the whole day a radiant atmosphere hovered, as it were, over the monastery.

Another initiation ceremony took place at the Alumbazar Math about this time, when *mantrams* were given to one lay and one monastic disciple, namely, Sri Sarat Chandra Chackravarti before mentioned, and Swami Suddhananda. The latter was one of those that had recently joined the Math as a Brahmachârin fired with Swamiji's conversations on *Tyâga* and *Vairâgyam*. Seeing Sarat Swamiji said, "To-day you are to be dedicated to the Lord !" Speaking as he did on the other occasion and testing the disciple's heart, he discoursed on *Shraddhâ* or earnest faith and devotion. "Arouse *Shraddhâ* in yourself and in your countrymen !" he was saying. "Like Nâchiketa go to the Yama's door for knowing the Truth, for the salvation of your soul, for the solution of the mystery of life and death ! If going into the jaws of death makes you gain the Truth, you have to do that fearlessly. All fear is death ; you have to go beyond it. Be fearless, be ready, from to-day, to lay down your life for your own *Moksha* and for that of others. Otherwise what is the use of bearing this burden of flesh and bones ? Being initiated into the fiery *mantram* of absolute renunciation for the sake of the Lord, give away your body for the good of the world, as did the Sage Dadhichi when the Devas approached him with the prayer and said that the Asuras could not be destroyed with any other weapon but by a thunderbolt made out of his bones !....."

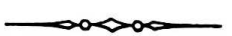
For this occasion, Swamiji after his bath putting on a new ochre robe, entered the worship-room and sat in meditation, in Yoga posture, his eyes half-closed being drawn inwards. In a few moments the expression of his face changed into one of indescribable calmness, and his body was as motionless as a statue. The disciple, waiting outside, was worshipping

Kovilloor Digital Library

in the silence of his heart that blessed figure which appeared to him to be the very embodiment of Shiva Mahâdeva, the great Lord of monks. After the meditation, the Swami called the disciple in affectionate tone, saying, "Come in, my son", and told him to fasten the door. This done, in obedience to Swamiji's orders he sat on his left, calm and steady, his heart vibrating with a feeling of awe never experienced before. Swamiji next placed his hand on the disciple's head and put some questions of a private and personal nature to him, and after receiving the answers uttered thrice the sacred *mantram* and asked him to repeat it thrice to him. Then giving instructions as to its practice he steadfastly gazed into the eyes of the disciple, whose mind now became merged in a state of concentration in which he lost all outward consciousness and so did not know how much time passed in that way. The ceremony terminated with the disciple's offering some fruit as *Gurudakshinâ*.

When the disciple came out, Suddhananda who was waiting outside all this time, entered the worship-room and prayed Swamiji to give him *mantram*. He had been fired with the idea of being duly initiated by him. Swamiji seeing the intensity of his desire and knowing him to be of a highly spiritual nature, waived aside all customary formalities and blessed him by initiating him as his disciple.

Leaving the worship-room Swamiji remarked to the Swami Nirmalananda with evident delight, "Tulsi, two sacrifices have been offered to-day!" The disciples were later given the Swami's *prasâda*. Writing of his own mood on this day, Sarat Chandra says that "he felt what true Freedom of the soul was, and that he was as if strangely removed from all earthly things to a region where millions of suns shone." Later in the day the Swami spoke at great length on the ideas of sin, on egoism and on the means of realisation of the Self.



Koviloor Digital Library

C.

THE FOUNDING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION.

Whenever Swamiji, or Sri Ramakrishna in his own time, came to Calcutta for a brief sojourn, he stayed at Balaram Babu's house in Baghbazar, where they and the monastic members of the Order always found a ready welcome and warm hospitality. On such occasions it was the scene of the gathering of *bhaktas* and visitors from all parts of the city, and a wave of spirituality would be roused by the inspired utterances of one or other of these two great teachers of men, as the case might be. It is natural, therefore, that Balaram Babu's house is associated with a special sanctity in the hearts of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda.

It was in the afternoon of the first of May 1897, that a representative gathering of all the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna took place at Balaram Babu's house, in response to Swamiji's invitation to them intimating his desire of holding a meeting for the purpose of founding an Association. He had long thought and made a plan of bringing about a close co-operation between the monastic and the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and of organising in a systematic way the hitherto unsystematic activities, both spiritual and philanthropic, of his *gurubhais*. When all had assembled, Swamiji opened the meeting by speaking in Bengalee to the following effect :—

"From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organisation nothing great and permanent can be done. But in a country like India, at our present stage of development, it does not seem to me well-advised to start an organisation upon the republican system in which every member should have equal voice, and in which its deliberations should be decided by the majority of the votes of the community. With the West the case is different.....

Koviloor Digital Library

Amongst us also, with the spread of education when we shall learn to sacrifice, or to stand above our individual interests and concerns for the good of the community or the nation at large, then the working of our Association will be conducted on republican principles. Taking these into consideration, we should have for our organisation at present a Dictator whose orders everyone should obey. Then, in the fulness of time, it will be guided by the opinion and consent of the members.

"This Association will bear the name of Him in whose name we have become Sannyâsins, taking Whom as your ideal you are leading the life of the householders in the field of activity of this Samsâra, and Whose holy name and the influence of Whose unique life and teachings have within twelve years of His passing away, spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and the West. Let this *Sangha*, or organisation, be therefore named as the Ramakrishna Mission. We are only the servants of the Master. May you all help us in this work."

The proposal being enthusiastically supported by all the householder disciples, the future method of work was discussed and some Resolutions were passed, comprising in the main the present principles and the aims and objects by which the movement was to be guided. As originally drawn up they were to the following effect :—

This Association (*Sangha*) will be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.

The *Aim* of the *Sangha* is to preach those truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, given out and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help those truths being made practical in the lives of others for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement.

The *Duty* of the Mission is to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

Its *Methods of Action* are :—(*a*) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses ; (b) to promote and encourage arts and industries ; and (c) to introduce and spread among the people in general

Koviloor Digital Library

Vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Indian Work Department : The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Ashramas in different places of India for the training of Sannyâsins and such householders as may be willing to devote their lives to the teaching of others, and to the finding of the means by which they would be enabled to educate the people, by going about from one province to another.

Its work in the *Foreign Department* should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of the Dharma and for creating a close relationship and a spirit of mutual help and sympathy between the foreign and the Indian centres.

The Aims and Ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it should have no connection with politics.

Anyone who believes in the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, or who sympathises or is willing to co-operate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership.

After the Resolutions were passed, office-bearers were appointed. Swami Vivekananda himself became the general President and made Swami Brahmananda and Swami Yogananda, the President and the Vice-President, respectively, of the Calcutta centre. It was decided that meetings would be held at Balaram Babu's house every Sunday afternoon, when recitations and readings from the Gita, the Upanishads and other Vedanta scriptures with comments and annotations would be given, and papers read and lectures delivered, the subjects being chosen by the President. All these were decided in the two preliminary meetings of the first and the fifth of May, and the first general meeting of members was held on the ninth under the Presidency of the Swami Brahmananda. For three years the Ramakrishna Mission held its sittings at the above place, and whenever Swamiji was in Calcutta he was present at almost all of them and spoke and sang to the joy of the audience.

Koviloor Digital Library

It may be stated here by way of parenthesis, that when the Ramakrishna Mission was chartered as a legally incorporated body in April of 1909, some additions and alterations as well as modifications in its body of rules and regulations, were deemed necessary to be effected, under the changed circumstances, and to meet the exigencies of the Law, some of them mostly of an executive nature, though its principles and objects remained the same as originally laid down by Swamiji. Thus, what is recognised as the *Ramakrishna Mission* now, is guided by the Governing Body composed of the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur, with members having votes, and exercises its jurisdiction over all its own branches of a philanthropic and charitable nature, and temporary relief-measures and works of public utility started in co-operation with the interested people of the localities concerned, or with the funds raised from the public, —in contradistinction to the *Ramakrishna Math* which is purely a religious and monastic body with its Maths and Ashramas, where Brahmacharins are trained to lead the life of practical spirituality, and are sent out either as teachers or workers to conduct or help in the management of its centres, or works started under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Thus, to explain further, as is done in "The First General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission" recently published, the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission are the twin institutions embodying respectively Renunciation and Service. The Ramakrishna Math is a monastic institution formed with the object of properly fulfilling the Divine trust imposed upon it by Sri Ramakrishna, as pointed out by the Swami Vivekananda, for perpetuating the ideal and the revelation of One Universal Religion, re-establishing the truths of the Vedas and all the other Scriptures of the world for modern humanity. To this monastic institution a legal status was assured by the Swami through a Deed of Trust executed by him early in 1899. It now administers its affairs, so far as necessary in a legal form, through a Board of

Koviloor Digital Library

Trustees with a President at its head, and preserves at the same time all the traditional character and polity of a monastic order with its own methods of spiritual discipline, training and culture. In this respect the "Math" with its various ramifications in different places is a separate institution from the "Mission." But when this monastic order steps out of the isolation of individual spiritual pursuits, and associates with the public in the sphere of service to humanity, it becomes the Ramakrishna Mission. It is then that the Trustees of the Math become the Governing Body of the Mission, and the President of the Math becomes its President also, and the public are invited to co-operate with the monastic order as members and associates of the Mission, in all the missionary, educational or charitable activities of the Mission. The Mission is therefore a collateral and dependent development of the Math itself, calculated to supply to the latter that further scope and public aspect which it requires for realising its ideal of Service. Thus the Mission, except in the constitution of its Governing Body, is an entirely public institution with its own body of rules and regulations and its various centres in the different parts of India.

Turning now from the proceedings of the inauguration meeting of a semi-public nature, one finds Swamiji in the inner circle of his *gurubhais* and disciples, talking about his ideas and intentions in starting this momentous movement. A *gurubhâi* having protested that Swamiji's ways of preaching, such as lecturing and holding meetings, and his ideas of doing works of public utility, were rather Western in type and conception and incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, he was roused to an apostolic mood and delivered himself thus with great fervour :—

"How do you know that these are not in keeping with his ideas ? Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits ? I shall break these limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the world. He never enjoined me to introduce his worship and the like. The methods of spiritual practice, concentration and meditation and other high ideals of religion that he taught,—those we must realise and teach mankind. Infinite are the ideas and infinite

Koviloor Digital Library

are the paths that lead to the Goal. I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already. Blessed are we that we have found refuge at the feet of our Master, and it is our bounden duty to give the ideas entrusted to us freely to the whole world."

The *gurubhâi* raising no dissentient voice to these words Swamiji continued :—

"Evidences of our Master's grace I have repeatedly testified to in my life. He himself is at my back and is making me do all these things in these ways. When I used to lie under a tree, exhausted, smitten with hunger, when I had not a strip of cloth even wherewith to tie my *koupina*, when I determined to travel the world though having not a pice with me,—even then, through his grace I received help and succour in every way ! Then again, when crowds jostled with one another in the streets of Chicago to have a sight of this Vivekananda, I have been able, through his blessings, to digest without difficulty all that honour, a hundredth part of which would make a man of ordinary calibre go off his head ! By the Will of the Lord, victory has been mine everywhere. Now I intend to do something for this country. Do you all give up doubts and misgivings and help me in my work, and you will see how by his grace wonders will be accomplished."

The *gurubhai* thus addressed now said :—

"Whatever you wish will be done. We are always ready to follow your leading. I clearly see that the Master is working through you. Still, I confess, doubts sometimes arise in the mind, seeing, as we did, Sri Ramakrishna's method of work so different, and I am led to questio myself if we are not straying from the path laid down by him."

Swamiji then said :—

"The thing is this. Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than what his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. If one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot measure our Master's unfathomable ideas ! One glance of his gracious eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant ! But then, if he now chooses instead to work through me, making me his instrument, I can only bow to his will."

Indeed, it was the Swami among all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who saw in the Master not a mere person but a principle, not only the apostle of Realisation and Renunciation, but also of Service to humanity in the spirit of worship. Did not Sri Ramakrishna fling away the bliss of Brahman so as to be of service to mankind ? Did he not treat all beings as

Koviloor Digital Library

Nârâyanas every moment of his life? Who among his disciples has not seen his spontaneous impulses of charity at the sight of poverty and misery, and his touching solicitations for their relief? Who could ever feel like him, his whole body and soul wrenched as it were, at the distress and destitution of his fellowmen and at the sight of oppression to men and animals? True, this phase of his unique character was considerably overshadowed by the grandeur of his illuminated personality ever merging in the superconscious realisation of Divinity and breaking forth into utterances of wonderful power and charm exhorting all to seek the Highest. It was left to his greatest disciple to interpret his Master's life and teachings from *all* angles, and not from a one-sided view or from one particular individualised outlook. It was the genius of the Swami Vivekananda to bring out and emphasise this beautiful human touch in his Master's nature and to clear the misconception which prevailed in the minds of many, that Renunciation and Service were conflicting ideas which could not be combined without detriment to one or the other. And it was to his glory that he concretised and gave shape to those divine impulses through the institution started under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission for practising and preaching the Dharma in its universal aspect, by intensifying Renunciation and Service, which, according to him, ought to be the twofold National Ideal of Modern India.

Koviloor Digital Library

CI.

THE MASTER IN BHAVA SAMADHI.

It was an afternoon, sometime later, of one of those days when Swamiji was living at Balaram Babu's house. He was talking in a light mood with some of his *gurubhais*, and old householder disciples of the Master. At these moments he would be most free with them, would make all sorts of jokes, and would not mind giving and receiving trenchant hits in return, in the most delightful of ways. He would be the Noren of old, sometimes criticising in the sharpest language his *gurubhais*, and at times even his own Master, though without losing the least bit of his *Bhakti* towards him, or rather because of his overmastering love for him. These moments were not for the public gaze, as there was a likelihood of his being misunderstood by those who could not be expected to enter into his inmost feelings and into the spirit which actuated him. These moments of relaxation were, moreover, the means of recuperation for him from the intense tension of thought to which his mind gravitated most of the time. All these were perfectly understood by his *gurubhais*, who out of their uncommon love for him tried by all means to draw him out even at their own expense, and enjoyed his sweet modes of using invectives against them,—the stronger the better enjoyed ! But no one knew when he would drift from his light and merry moods into the serious and plunge into the depths of metaphysical introspection, or soar into the highest summits of spiritual Realisation. It was one of such occasions which might have been well passed by, but then the readers of this great life would have been deprived of the glimpse of one of the hidden well-springs of his soul, which make him rank, pre-eminently, as a prophet and, in the words of his Master, an *Achâryakoti.*

Koviloor Digital Library

But to return to the narration of the episode : One of the Swami's *gurubhais* was taking him to task for not preaching Sri Ramakrishna and challenging him to prove how his ideas could be reconciled with their Master's teachings. For Sri Ramakrishna was, above all, for *Bhakti* and for practising Sâdhanâs for realising God, while Swamiji always incited them to go about working, preaching, and serving the poor and the diseased,—just those things which brought the mind outward and, as such, were impediments to the life of Sâdhanâ. Then again, Swamiji's ideas of starting Maths and Homes of Service for the public good, his ideas of organisation and of patriotism, undoubtedly Western in conception, his efforts of creating a new type of Sannyâsins with a broader ideal of Renunciation,—all these and others of a similar nature were incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of *Tyaga*, and would have been surely discountenanced by their Master. Swamiji took these observations of his *gurubhai* at first in a light mood and began to retort in a jocular way, saying, "What do you know ? You are an ignorant man. You are a fit *chelâ* of Sri Ramakrishna ! Like *Guru* like *chelâ* ! Your study ended, like that of Prahlad, at seeing the first Bengalee alphabet '*Ka*', for it reminded Prahlad of Krishna and he could not proceed further because of the tears that came into his eyes ! You are *bhakats*, or in other words, sentimental fools ! What do you understand of religion ? You are babies. You are only good at praying with folded hands, 'O Lord, how beautiful is Your nose, how sweet are Your eyes', and all such nonsense,—and you think your salvation is secured, and Sri Ramakrishna will come at the final hour and take you up by the hand to the highest heaven ! Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Mâyâ ! Because Sri Ramakrishna did not do them himself ! Because he said to someone, 'Seek and find God first ; doing good to the world is a presumption !' As if God is such an easy thing to be achieved ! As if He is such a fool as to make Himself a plaything in the hands of the imbecile !"

Koviloor Digital Library

Growing more and more serious he thundered on like a surging sea :—

"You think you have understood Sri Ramakrishna better than myself ! You think *Jnanam* is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your *Bhakti* is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as *you* have understood Him, which is mighty little. Hands off ! Who cares for *your* Ramakrishna ? Who cares for *your Bhakti* and *Mukti* ? Who cares what the Scriptures say ? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *Tamas*, to stand on their own feet and be *Men*, inspired with the spirit of *Karma-Yoga*. I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or anyone, I am a follower of him only who carries out my plans ! I am not a servant of Ramakrishna or anyone, but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own *Bhakti* or *Mukti* !"

Speaking in this vein for some time, his face looked like a flaming fire, his eyes dazzled, his voice was choked, his whole frame shook with intense emotion. It seemed as if he was going to burst. He could not contain himself any longer. Tears streamed from his eyes. Like a flash of lightning he was up on his feet and ran from the room, as though thrown off by a great force, into his sleeping apartment. His *guru-bhais* were seized with fear, and were repentant for having spoken to him in that strain. A hushed silence prevailed ; a bewildered look was upon their faces. A few of them mastered courage to follow Swamiji, some minutes later, to his room. Entering with cautious steps, they found him sitting in meditation posture, his whole frame stiff, tears flowing from his half-closed eyes, the hairs of his body standing on end. He was absorbed in, what seemed to them, *Bhâva-Samâdhi* ! They stood there speechless for a while, daring not to disturb or rouse him. Then they came out and waited near the door outside. Nearly an hour passed in this way when Swamiji got up and washing his face came out to the sitting-room where friends were waiting eager to see him again. He sat solemn for a while. Everyone marked the distinct signs of the great tempest which had blown over him. His eyes and face were still flushed. But there was a majestic calm and peace about him, a transcendental radiance. The atmosphere

Koviloor Digital Library

was too tense for anyone to utter a word. Then Swamiji broke the silence and delivered himself thus :—

"When one attains *Bhakti* one's heart and nerves become so soft and delicate that they cannot bear even the touch of a flower ! Do you know that I cannot even read a novel nowadays ! I cannot think or talk of Sri Ramakrishna long, without being overwhelmed. So I am trying and trying always to keep down the welling rush of *Bhakti* within me. I am trying to bind and bind myself with the iron chains of *Jnanam*, for still my work to my motherland is unfinished, and my message to the world not yet fully delivered. So, as soon as I find that *Bhakti* feelings are trying to come up to sweep me off my feet, I give a hard knock to them and make myself as firm as adamant by bringing up austere *Jnanam*. Oh, I have work to do ! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left His work to be done by me and will not give me rest till I have finished it ! And, Oh, how shall I speak of Him ! Oh, His love or me !———"

Swami Yogananda and others fearing a repetition of the above experience when they saw that he was working himself up again, gently interrupted him by saying that, as it was too warm in the room, would he not like to have an evening stroll on the roof of the house. Then they took him up there and diverted his thoughts by light talk, till it was far into the night and he was his normal self again.

This incident is intensely significant, exposing as it does the depths of the Swami's inner nature, namely that of *Bhakti*, and also conveying an idea of the tremendous cost with which his *Jnanam* and his spirit of working-for-others had been acquired by the control of "that consuming fire of love." The monks of the Order anxiously sought to divert his attention, as said above, for they believed that such tempestuous outbursts of his real Self would bring closer to his mind *That* which he was in reality,—and then they knew he would tear off all mortal bonds and soar, through *mahasamadhi*, into the region of the Supreme Consciousness of Brahman. Reflecting on such moments in the Swami's life, one of the greatest of his *Sannyasin gurubhais* has said, "You see, Thakur has brought us all into this world to keep his (the Swami's) mind diverted to external matters and to his various plans of work, so that he may live long to fulfil our Master's mission.

Koviloor Digital Library

Otherwise he may fly off at any time to the sphere of the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi."

This same incident, besides being particularly instructive to his own *gurubhais* and disciples, gives a great insight into the Swami's complex character. To all appearance, he was often a living paradox, a veritable contradiction in terms of ideas ; but beneath the surface of appearance he was invariably the very paragon and explanation of the spiritual life. His varying moods attested to the immense variety of his religious experience and analysis, and the understanding of the man is immediately possible when it is remembered that sometimes in order to strengthen a certain aspect of the religious consciousness, he would exalt it at the expense of all others, as he did in the incident narrated above, when he, for the time being, spoke of the path of *Karma*, as higher even than that of *Bhakti* or *Mukti*. And, in this particular instance, as was usual in such cases, so profound and convincing was the impression created, that nevermore were words of protest to his plans and methods of work raised in his presence. It was like the clearing of the atmosphere, which had been overhanging with clouds of doubt, and now and again breaking forth into storms of conflict of ideals. Everyone realised as never before that the Divine Master was at the back of Vivekananda working through him, and the mission of His life shone with a new meaning and with a new light

Koviloor Digital Library

CII.

LIFE IN CALCUTTA.

Life in Calcutta brought the Swami back to incessant demands upon his personality. People flocked to him at all hours of the day, seeking his instruction and blessings and the privilege of taking the dust of his feet. Daily, invitations from householder disciples to visit their residences poured in, and the Swami was going to and fro from Alumbazar to Calcutta. Various striking conversations took place daily at Balaram Babu's house. Now the talk would be on the Education that India needs, and he would traverse the whole ground in its different aspects in regard to men, women, and the masses, putting forward practical suggestions by which it could be conducted on national lines after the Vedic and Pauranic models. Then at another time he would speak of Guru Govinda Singh and his method of training disciples, and would dwell with his characteristic eloquence on the heroism of the great Sikh Guru, his renunciation, his austerities, his forbearance, his life-staking labours to bring about the successful revival of the Sikh nation, his re-conversion to Hinduism of those that had turned Mohammedans, by giving them initiation and incorporating them among the Sikhs, and his heroic death on the banks of the sacred Narmada. And, above all, he would reiterate on his power of infusing a wonderful spirit of faith and courage into his disciples, so much so that every one of them would dare in his name to face in battle "a lakh and a quarter" of the opposing forces in defence of their rights and religion! And on occasions like these, when he spoke of the master-minds of India, those who grouped round the Swami would also feel a stirring of the soul, as if they were in the very presence of the spirit of the hero in question. Of these constant meetings and conversations carried on without regard to time,

Koviloor Digital Library

place, or position,—now sitting, now standing, now walking, even when taking his meal or rest,—it is impossible to make a record. One of these memorable occasions, however, is briefly related here, as giving a glimpse into the heart of the man.

It was some ten days since Swamiji was living at Balaram Babu's house. He was then giving lessons on Rig-Veda with Sâyana's *Bhâshya* to Sarat Chandra. Prof. Max Muller's edition of Rig-Veda with the translation of Sâyana's commentary in several volumes, was procured by the disciple from a rich man's library. In explaining the wonderful reasonings and the power of argumentation which Sâyana had brought to bear in proving the beginninglessness of the Vedas, Swamiji sometimes gave the highest praise to the commentator and at other times sharply criticised him and gave his own opinion on the true import of certain abstruse passages, quite different from Sâyana's, by citing authorities and proofs in his support.

In course of the lesson the talk drifted on to Max Muller and Swamiji remarked: "Do you know what I think sometimes? I think that Sâyana has re-incarnated himself in the person of Max Muller to bring to light his own commentaries. And since meeting the Professor, this belief has been all the more confirmed. Such a persevering scholar, erudite in the Vedas and the Vedanta, cannot be met with even in this country.....The aged couple living as *Vânaprasthas* in their peaceful retreat in Oxford struck me to be like Vasishthha and Arundhati of Vedic fame. The old man actually shed tears at parting from me!"

On being questioned, why should then Sâyanâchârya instead of choosing a Brâhmana body in the sacred land of Aryavarta, take birth as a *mlechchha*, Swamiji replied: "It is only from ignorance that men make such distinction as one is an *Arya* and another is a *mlechchha*. But of what meaning is all this division of caste, colour or race to him who is the interpreter of the Vedas, and the shining image of the highest knowledge itself? For the good of humanity,

Koviloor Digital Library

he can take birth wherever he pleases. Humanly speaking, where could he have possibly got the expenses of bringing out this gigantic work if he were not born in the West where there are learning and wealth in abundance? Have you not heard that the East India Company made a grant of Rupees 900,000 to publish this Rig-Veda? Still that did not suffice. Numerous Vedic Pandits of our country were employed on monthly stipends on this task. Has anyone in this country ever seen in this age such an immense expenditure of money for the sake of promoting learning and knowledge? Max Muller himself has written in his preface, that for twenty-five years he wrote manuscripts only, and it took him twenty years further to print them! To devote forty-five years of one's life to make such a difficult book of an obsolete language ready for the public, is not the work of an ordinary man. Is it for nothing that I call him Sâyana?"

The study being resumed, Swamiji went on fully supporting Sâyana's view, that Creation has come out in and through the Veda. In a long discourse he elucidated this abstruse and apparently absurd statement, with wonderful insight and profound philosophical reasoning carrying conviction, by laying stress and dilating on the point that by Veda was meant the aggregate of infinite truths and eternal ideas, the mass of subtle essences in seed form, as it were, of all gross manifestations. He then described, by the analogy of the successive stages of merging in the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and those of return from it into the plane of external consciousness, the process of involution and evolution of the Universe, with such acute nicety of details as to convince one that he had had himself the personal experience of that superconscious state. He showed the rationality of the Vedic teaching that at the time of *Pralaya* or involution, as it is in Samadhi, the whole universe resolves itself into sound or Word, the sound into supersensuous *Om*, and even *Om* into the eternal *Nâda*, where there is no perception of Duality and only Brahman remains. Then at the time of Creation, or rather projection of the universe, the return march begins in a reverse order

Koviloor Digital Library

from Brahman, down to the sound or Word, and *Word* is Veda, or visible Brahman, or God. As soon as the memory of each word, or the idea that the word connotes, arises in Brahman, whose very wish is fruition itself, the particular object evolves into shape, and thus the universe with its infinite varieties comes into manifestation, much in the same way as in our human experience a Yogi by concentration on certain objects produces things at his will."

When the talk was going on, Girish Babu came in and after mutual greetings and salutations sat attentively listening to the discourse. Turning to him Swamiji said in merriment, "Well, G. C., you did not care to make a study of these things, but passed your days with your 'Krishnas and Vishnus' !" meaning, like the ordinary type of a *bhakta* with his simple faith undisturbed by philosophical enquiry and analysis.

"What avails me all this reading of the Vedas, my brother ?" spoke Girish Babu with his charming faith and modesty. "I have neither the leisure nor the intellect to penetrate into them. Bowing to them from a distance I shall, by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, cross the ocean of the world. Because He had much teaching and preaching work to be done by you, He made you read all those Scriptures." Saying this Girish Babu bowed again and again before those big volumes of the Rig-Veda, repeating to himself, "Glory be to Sri Ramakrishna who is in the form of the Vedas !"

It was Swamiji's nature that whenever he spoke on a certain path of Sadhana—be it *Brahma-Jnana*, or *Bhakti*, or *Karma Yoga*, or the National Ideal—he would present it with such force and beauty as to impress it deeply on the minds of his hearers as the highest goal of human endeavour. Girish Babu knew Swamiji too well to think that he made light of *Bhakti* or faith. But thinking as it were, that his words might mislead others about him, he spoke thus : "Well, Noren, let me ask you one thing. Of Vedas and Vedanta you have read enough. But are there any remedies prescribed in them

Koviloor Digital Library

for these wailings, these cries of hungry mouths, these abominable sins like adultery etc., and the many other evils and miseries that one meets with every day? The mother of that house there, who at one time fed daily fifty mouths, has not had the wherewithal to cook even for herself and her children for the last three days! The lady of such and such a family has been violated by ruffians and tortured to death! The young widow of So-and-so has succumbed from causing abortion to hide her shame! I ask, Noren, have you found in the Vedas any preventive for these evils?" Thus Girish Babu went on painting vividly the picture of human frailties and miseries and the dark and dismal side of society, while Swamiji sat speechless and visibly moved. Thinking of the pain and misery of the world, tears came into his eyes, and to hide his feelings he walked out of the room.

Girish Babu then addressing the disciple said: "Now, did you see with your own eyes what a large heart your Guru possesses! I do not esteem him so much for being a scholar and intellectual giant, as for that large-heartedness which made him walk out, shedding tears for the misery of mankind. As soon as he heard of it, mark you, all his Vedas and Vedanta vanished out of sight, as it were, all the learning and scholarship that he was displaying only a moment ago was cast aside and his whole being was filled to overflow with the milk of loving-kindness. Your Swamiji is as much a *Jnani* and a Pandit as a lover of God and humanity!"

After a while Swamiji came back and in course of a talk beautifully reconciled the two conflicting paths of Faith and Philosophy. On seeing Swami Sadananda enter, he told him in a touching manner that his heart was gnawing with pain at the poverty and distress of his countrymen, and exhorted him to do something to alleviate them by opening at least a centre of relief on a small scale at once, where the poor will be helped and the diseased nursed and treated with care. The disciple made a ready response. Turning to Girish Babu Swamiji said: "Look here, G. C., the thought comes to me that even if I have to undergo

Koviloor Digital Library

a thousand births to relieve the misery of the world, aye, even to remove the least pain from anyone, I shall cheerfully do it ! I think, Oh, of what use is my personal *Mukti* alone ! I shall take everyone along that path with myself !"

Aye, here is the mainspring of all his activities and plans of work in India, the fountainhead of that new spirit of Service which has since arisen in his land.

In this same time the Swami, in company with Sarat Chandra, paid a visit to the Mahakali Pathsala, an institution founded for the education of girls by the widely-known Mataji Tapaswini. Himself much interested in the solution of problems affecting Indian womanhood, he had gladly accepted the lady's invitation. He was taken round the classes, and in one of them the girls at Mataji's order chanted the Hymn of Meditation to Shiva in his presence, and performed worship in the way they were taught to do. One of them, particularly clever, recited a *sloka* from the Raghuvansam of Kalidas and explained it in Sanskrit. Swamiji was very much pleased and blessed her. In conversation with Mataji, he complimented her on the satisfactory results her institution had attained through her perseverance, care, and devotion to the work. Mataji said with all humility,—"Swamiji, I worship these girls as Bhagavati. I know no other worship." When leaving, he wrote his opinion in the visitors' book, of which the last sentence was, "The movement is in the right direction."

All the way to the Mahakali Pathsala, Swamiji spoke to the disciple of the paramount need of educating the Indian girls, and of his plans of starting model institutions, and also convents for the *Brahmacharinis* and nuns, much on the same lines as the monasteries for men, so that the women after receiving proper training would go about working among themselves for the spread of education and culture. On his drive back to Balaram Babu's house, he pointed out by citing the example of the Mataji, how she, born in a far-away province and herself a renouncer of the world, was devoting her life to the cause of her sex in Bengal, and commented that

Koviloor Digital Library

women alone could teach women. He did not like, he said, however, the idea of having male teachers in that school, for in his opinion, only educated widows and *Brahmacharinis* should take the whole charge of such work. He incidentally spoke against the evils of early marriage, which was the cause not only of the physical deterioration of the race but also of the excessive number of widows in Hindu society. He held that instead of shouting for reforms after the foreign models, our present duty was to give our girls education and education alone on a wide scale, on purely national lines, and let them solve their own problems as they were sure to do in the fulness of time, when they would stand on their own feet, strong in their conviction of what was conducive to their own welfare.

In these days the Swami was full of many plans, but unfortunately the state of his health causing him trouble, he was counselled by his physicians and urged by his *gurubhais* to start as soon as possible for the dry and cool climate of Almora whither Miss Muller, who had joined him in Calcutta from England, and Mr. Goodwin had already preceded him. Also, he was receiving repeated invitations from the residents of that hill-station requesting him to pay them a visit. So he left Calcutta on the 6th of May in the company of some of his *gurubhais* and disciples.

Koviloor Digital Library

CIII.

IN ALMORA.

The Swami Vivekananda met with a most cordial welcome at Lucknow where he remained one night on his way to Almora. Mr. Goodwin thus continues the narrative under the heading, "The Swami Vivekananda's Triumphal Entry into Almora in the Himalayas" :—

"• • • At Kathgodam he was met by several Almora admirers and Mr. Goodwin who had come down to receive him and accompany him on the ride through the hills to Almora. At Lodea, close to Almora, there was a large crowd of citizens waiting in the afternoon to convey him along the final part of his journey, and at their request the Swami mounted a horse dressed in handsome trappings and headed a procession into the town. It seemed that, as the bazaar was reached, every citizen of the place joined the company. So dense was the crowd that some difficulty was experienced in leading the Swami's horse through. Thousands of Hindu ladies from the tops of houses and from windows, showered flowers and rice on the Swamiji, as he passed along. In the centre of the town, a section of the interesting old-fashioned bazaar street had been turned into a pandal capable of holding three thousand people ; decorated cloths stretched across from side to side of the street forming the roof, and the ends being beautified with festoons of flowers, banners, &c. In addition, every house displayed lights till the town appeared to be a blaze of light, and the native music with the constant cheers of the crowd, made the entire scene most remarkable, even to those who had accompanied Swamiji through the whole of his journey from Colombo.

"Naturally with from four to five thousand persons crowding inside and outside of the pandal, and with excitement in full play, the proceedings of the formal welcome were brief. Pandit Jawala Dutt Joshi read first a Hindi address of welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee (a translation of which is to be found in the "Complete Works", pages 686 & 687). Pandit Hari Ram Pande followed with a second address from the Swami's host, Lala Badri Sah Thulghatia, and a Pandit read an equally appreciative address in Sanskrit."

The Swami made a brief reply, in which he touched feelingly upon the spiritualising influence that the blessed Hima-

Koviloor Digital Library

layas had exerted in the world of Indian thought, and how he himself longed from his very youth to pass his days in their midst. Though he knew that he would no more be able to do so in the way he had planned before, still he yearned that "that silence and unknownness" which had been his might be given to him again, so that he might pass the last part of his life in peace and meditation somewhere in the recesses of that ever-holy land. At the very sight of those mountains, he said, "all the propensities to work, that ferment that had been going on in his brain for years, seemed to quiet down", and his mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas stand for—Renunciation !

Again the Swami was busy. Whole days passed in holding religious discourse with numerous visitors. In spite of his not getting rest, his health improved gradually, so much so that he wrote on the 29th of May to his Doctor friend in Calcutta under whose treatment he was at the time :—

" * * * I began to take a lot of exercise on horseback, both morning and evening. Since that I am very much better indeed. I was so much better the first week of my gymnastics, that I have scarcely felt so well since I was a boy and used to have '*Kusti*' exercises. I really began to feel that it was a pleasure to have a body. Each movement made me conscious of strength,—every movement of the muscles was pleasurable. That exhilarating feeling has subsided somewhat, yet I feel very strong. In a trial of strength I could make both G. G. and Niranjan go down before me in a minute. In Darjeeling I always felt that I was not the same man. Here I feel that I have no disease whatsoever, but there is one marked change. I never in my life could sleep as soon as I got into bed. I must toss about for at least two hours. Only from Madras to Darjeeling (during the first month) I would sleep as soon as my head touched the pillow. That ready disposition to sleep has gone now entirely, and my old tossing habit and feeling hot after the evening meal have come back. I do not feel any heat after the midday meal. There being an orchard here, I began to take more fruit than usual as soon as I came. ...There has not been any thirst even though the days are fearfully hot... On the whole my own feeling is one of revival of great strength and cheerfulness, and a feeling of exuberant health, only I am afraid I am getting fat on a too much milk diet....The first week's indisposition at Almora might have been caused to a certain extent by my passage through the 'terrai'. Anyhow I feel very, very strong now. You ought

Koviloor Digital Library

to see me, Doctor, when I meditate sitting in front of the beautiful snow-peaks and repeat from the Upanishads,—

न तस्य मृत्युर्न जरा न व्याधिः प्राप्तं हि योगाग्निमयं शरीरम्—

'He has neither death, nor decay, nor disease, for, verily, he has obtained a body full of the fire of Yoga'."

Those who had accompanied the Swami to Almora or either met him there, or who accompanied him later in his journeys through Northern India, were the Swamis Yogananda, Niranjanananda, Adbhutananda, Achyutananda, Vijnanananda, Sadananda, old Sachchidananda, Brahmacharis Suddhananda and Krishnalal, and Mr. J. J. Goodwin. With these the Swami passed many an hour of fun as well as of religious instruction. His mind could not take rest, though his body was now quite rested. He was constantly busy with some new subject ; and now and then he would receive pressing correspondence from some scholar or disciple asking for the solution of some philosophical problem, to which he would reply in suitable words, now in English, now in Sanskrit. These letters, like those which he had written in a heat of spiritual fervour, are characterised by *Vairagyam*, renunciation, and strength that comes out of the consciousness of Truth.

But the Swami was not to be left in peace, which he desired above all things. Almost since his landing on the Indian soil and receiving unprecedented ovations and homage from the nation as a whole, a persistent campaign of misrepresentation of his work and influence and baseless attacks were made chiefly by certain interested American Missions in India, and through them in the United States, to thwart his life-work there in his absence, and to check the ever-increasing tide of religious revival which his triumphal progress through Southern India aroused. False and base reports communicated to American papers about the Swami's success and his propaganda, calculated to discredit him, found wide publicity and were made capital of in the United States, giving rise to fierce criticisms against him. Though heaps of these newspaper cuttings reached him, Swamiji, not in the

Koviloor Digital Library

least daunted, treated these with utter indifference, as was his wont, being sure as he was of the ultimate failure of such unrighteous attempts. It is needless to speak of them in detail, as the Swami's own words written in private letters and those of his American friends and disciples who stood up in his defence are amply explanatory. It is a pity that a distinguished Christian Divine like Dr. Barrows, who came out to India on a lecturing tour shortly before Swamiji's return from the West, out of despair made no secret of his feelings of jealousy and distrust while he was in this country and after his return home. As early as the thirtieth January 1897 Swamiji had written to a friend in Chicago :—

"I had written a letter to my people from London (see "Complete Works", page 1055) to receive Dr. Barrows kindly. They accorded him a big reception, but it was not my fault that he could not make any impression in Calcutta...Now Dr. Barrows thinks a world of me, I hear. Such is the world !"

The very evening of his landing in California on the 10th of May, Dr. Barrows was reported to have made remarks in an interview with the representative of the "*Chronicle*", which, according to the paper, "would make that Indian personage's ears tingle if he could hear them." Here are some excerpts :—

"The Swami arrived in Madras one week ahead of me, but he did not call upon me to renew our acquaintanceship. Instead, he hurriedly left Madras the day after I arrived. All that the '*Chronicle*' credited him with saying about the women of America is true, and knowing that he had been telling lies he avoided me. There is one thing I want to correct however. The Swami has not lost caste through his conduct. It transpires that he never was a Brahmin. He belongs to the Sudra caste, the lowest of the respectable castes in India. All that he has said about American women and American institutions disgusted some of the Hindus I met. They came to me and declared that he did not represent or preach their faith.

"What I particularly object to in Vivekananda is his ridiculous and exaggerated statement about the influence of Hindu speakers in England and America. He is a man of brilliant and pleasant qualities, but he seems to have lost his head. I could never tell whether to take him seriously or not. He struck me as being a Hindu Mark Twain.

"He is a man of genius and has some following, though only temporary."

Kovilloor Digital Library

Commenting on the above the *Brahmavadin* of July 31st says :—

"* * * An English journalist who has accompanied the Swami during the whole of his stay in India, says that in no speech, in no interview, and, as far as he knows, in no conversation, has a single word fallen from him derogatory to American women. On the contrary he has lost no opportunity of speaking of their generosity and kindness to him, and of their sincerity in the search for truth. The other charge is equally untrue. When asked about his mission, the Swami has repeatedly avoided answering at all, and when pressed to talk on the subject, has spoken with a modesty which would well become some of those who appear to be seeking notoriety at his expense. Those who know the Swami will readily understand how ridiculous is a charge of ingratitude as made against him."

Mrs. Sara C. Bull writing in defence of the Swami to Dr. Lewis G. Janes on June 7th says :—

"Thank you for the California clipping. Since Dr. Barrows so unqualifiedly denounces Vivekananda as a liar and for that reason charges him with intent to avoid him at Madras, I regret, for his own good, that Dr. Barrows should have omitted all mention of the Swami Vivekananda's widely circulated letters of welcome urging upon the Hindus, whatever their views of Dr. Barrows' message concerning their and his own religion might be, to offer a hospitality of thought and greeting worthy the kindness extended to the Eastern delegates at Chicago by Dr. Barrows and Mr. Bonney. Those letters circulated at the time when the Indian nation was preparing a welcome unprecedented for warmth and enthusiasm to the monk, contrast markedly with Dr. Barrows' recent utterances in California, on his own home-coming, concerning Vivekananda, and bring the two men before the Indian public for their judgment. * * *

"It may be added in this connection, that Vivekananda was wearied to the extreme and was threatened with a break-down in health from the first to the last of his public receptions on Indian soil, and, finally, by command of his physician obliged to forego more fatigue and take absolute rest for some months' time. Vivekananda having been my guest, attacks concerning him are sent me, and I know that for two years previous to his return to India the Swami was quoted both here and there as having denounced American women at different points in India, showing that he has a double or that his opponents pass on, as does Dr. Barrows, sentiments deemed for his utterance, omitting the sum and substance of what he has uttered again and again. The dry humour of American pleasantries not infrequently used by gentlemen, but unsafe for any foreigner, occasionally tempt the monk with his rare

Koviloor Digital Library

facility in the use of English, to a misplaced and out-of-taste quotation, while it is also true that his habitual self-control is under strong provocation sometimes lost; but a fair opponent he is and, I can testify, to even unfair and untruthful detractors. With the power held in common with great preachers and artists to draw to himself emotional men and women, it is to his credit that he may sometimes use harsh characterisation rather than permit a blind following to himself.

"The homes open to the Swami Vivekananda in the United States would honour any man. His friends will agree with Dr. Barrows that he has genius, not for geniality alone, but for intellectual power and the modesty of the true scholar, that will guard him from egotism and vanity. He deals as few can with agnosticism and atheism, and gives earnest students a philosophical analysis that establishes Religion, embracing the sectarian religions, and in spirituality he has the childlikeness of spirit that will make him the loving servant of his people.

"It is always a pain to encounter workers rightly devoted to sectarian interests and service, indulging in the present rule of habitual asperities and quick distrust rather than looking for points of contact. I send you quotations from the Swami's letters to India and here, giving in reply Vivekananda's sober opinions to the points of attack as made by Dr. Clark, Dr. Barrows and others. Pray use them or my own estimate as you deem fit."

'P. S. The allusion to Vivekananda's exaggerated statement of his Western work and Mission is as mistaken as Dr. Barrows' suggestion that he has only a temporary influence. Vivekananda returns *not Europeanised*, and the urgent calls to be filled as soon as his health permits are evidence of this. I believe him as one to welcome all true religious workers there.

"The German schools, the English Orientalists and our own Emerson testify to the fact that it is literally true that Vedantic thought pervades the Western thought of to-day, and it is in this sense only that Vivekananda could mean that thousands in the West are Vedantists,—a philosophy able to include sectarians."

The following quotations from the Swami's letters written during these times to intimate disciples in America, referring to the above controversy and certain others from rival bodies in India, furnish the key to his position and his attitude towards them and explain his conduct. Writing on February twenty-fifth he says:—

"I have not a moment to die, as they say. What with processions and tom-tomings and various other methods of reception all over the country I am *nearly dead*.....On the other hand, the country is full

Koviloor Digital Library

of persons jealous and pitiless who would leave no stones unturned to pull my work to pieces.

"But as you know well, the more the opposition the more is the demon in me roused."

Remarking on the cause of failure of Dr. Barrows' mission in India he writes in his letter of April 28th:—

"Dr. Barrows has reached America by this time, I hope. Poor man! He came here to preach the most bigoted Christianity, with the usual result that nobody listened to him. Of course they received him very kindly, but that was my letter that did it. I could not put brains into him! Moreover, he seems to be a queer sort of man. I hear that he was mad at the national rejoicings over my coming home. You ought to have sent a brainier man anyway, for the Parliament of Religions has been made a farce of to the Hindu mind by Dr. Barrows. On metaphysical lines no nation on earth can hold a candle before the Hindu,—and curiously all those that come over here from Christian lands to preach, have that one antiquated foolishness of an argument that the Christians are powerful and rich and the Hindus are not, ergo Christianity is better than Hinduism, to which the Hindu very aptly retorts, that that is the very reason why Hinduism is a religion and Christianity is not, because in this beastly world it is blackguardism and that alone *prospers;* virtue always suffers. It seems, however advanced the Western nations are in scientific culture, they are mere babies in metaphysical and spiritual education. Material science can only give worldly prosperity, whilst spiritual science is for eternal life. If there be no eternal life, still the enjoyment of spiritual thoughts as ideals is keener and makes a man happier, whilst the foolery of materialism leads to competition and undue ambition and ultimate death, individual and national.

" * * * Do you know Dr. Colston Turnbull of Chicago? He came here a few weeks before I reached India. He seems to have had a great liking for me, with the result that Hindu people all liked him very much."

In the end he jocosely observes:—

" * * * I am going to grow a big beard, now that my hair is turning grey. It gives a venerable appearance and saves one from American scandal-mongers. Oh thou white hairs, how much thou canst conceal! All glory unto thee, Hallelujah!"

Justifying his plain-speaking on certain occasions in India, which gave offence to the parties concerned, he writes to a friend on May the fifth :—

"About the —s and the —s, you must remember first that in India, they are non-entities They may publish a few papers and make a lot

Koviloor Digital Library

of splash and try to catch Occidental ears, but I do not know if there are two dozen —s of Hindu birth and two hundred —s in the whole of India. I was one man in America and another here. Here the whole nation is looking upon me as their authority,—there I was a much reviled preacher. Here princes draw my carriage,—there I would not be admitted to a decent hotel! My utterances here, therefore, must be for the good of the race, my people,—however unpleasant they might appear to a friend's acceptance. Love and toleration for everything sincere and honest—but never for hypocrisy! The —s tried to fawn and flatter me, as I was 'the authority' in India. Therefore it was all the the more necessary for me to stop my work from lending any sanction to their humbugs, by a few bold decisive words, and the thing is done. I am very glad of it. If my health had permitted I would have cleared India of these upstarts and humbugs, at least tried my best.....Let me again tell you that India is already Ramakrishna's and for a *purified* Hinduism, whether I live a few years more or not."

On the 3rd of June he writes from Almora in a mood of Vairagyam :—

"As for myself I am quite content. I have roused a good many of our people and that was all I wanted. Let things have their course and *Karma* its sway. I have no bonds here below. I have seen life and it is all self,—life is for self, love for self, honour for self, everything for self. I look back and scarcely find any action that I have done for self,—even my wicked deeds were not for self. So I am content. Not that I feel I have done anything specially good or great, but the world is so little, life so mean a thing, existence so, so servile,—that I wonder and smile that human beings, rational souls, should be running after the self —so mean and detestable a prize!

"This is the truth : We are caught in a trap and the sooner one gets out the better for one. I have seen the truth, let the body float up or down, who cares!

"It is a beautiful mountain park I am living in now. On the north extending almost all along the horizon, rises peak after peak of the snow-clad Himalayas, forests abounding...I would be here this summer, and when the rains set in I would go down to the plains to work.

"I was born for the life of the scholar—retired, quiet, poring over my books. But the Mother dispenses othe wise. Yet the tendency is there."

And on the ninth of July he is seen writing the following letter to an intimate friend in America who grew nervous and uneasy at the repeated attacks made against him in the news-papers, being afraid that these might injure his cause there. The letter shows the Swami in his combative spirit, his

Koviloor Digital Library

righteous indignation roused under extreme provocation, and is a masterpiece of self-defence and passionate monasticism :—

"...I had also a lot of cuttings from different American papers fearfully criticising my utterances about American women and furnishing me with the strange news that I had been outcasted ! As if I had any caste to lose being a Sannyasin !!

"Not only no caste has been lost, but it has considerably shattered the opposition to sea-voyage, my going to the West. If I should have to be outcasted, I would have to be done so with half the ruling princes of India and almost all of educated India. On the other hand, the leading Rajah of the caste to which I belonged before my entering the Order publicly got up a banquet in my honour, at which were most of the big bugs of that caste. The Sannyasins, on the other hand, *do not* dine with anyone in India as *beneath the dignity* of Gods to dine with mere mortals, as they are *Narayanas*, while the others are mere men ; and dear M—, these feet have been washed and wiped and worshipped by the descendants of a hundred kings and there has been a *progress* through the country which none ever commanded in India. It will suffice to say that the police were necessary to keep order if I ventured out into the streets ! This is outcasting indeed ! Of course that took the starch out of the Missoos, and who are they here ? Nobodies ; we are in blissful ignorance of their existence all the time. I had in a lecture said something about the Missoos and the origin of that species, except the English Churchmen, and in that connection I had to refer to the very churchy women of America and their power of inventing scandals. This the Missoos are parading as an attack on American women *en masse* to undo my work there, as they well know that anything said against themselves will rather please the U. S. public. My dear M.—, supposing I had said all sorts of fearful things against the 'Yanks', would that be paying off a millionth part of what they say of our *mothers and sisters ?* 'Neptune's waters' would be perfectly useless to wash off the hatred the Christian 'Yanks' of both sexes bear to us 'heathens in India',—and what harm have we done them ? Let the 'Yanks' learn to be patient under criticism and then criticise others. It is a well-known psychological fact that those who are ever ready to abuse others cannot bear the very slightest touch of criticism themselves. Then again, what do I owe them ? Except your family, Mrs. B—, Mr. and Mrs. L—and a few other kind persons, who else came forward to help me work out my ideas ? I had to work till I am at death's door and *had to spend nearly the whole of my best energies in America*, so that they might learn to be broader and more spiritual ! In England I worked only six months. There was not a breath of scandal save one, and that was the working of an American woman, which greatly relieved my English friends. Not only no attacks, but many of the best

Koviloor Digital Library

English Church clergymen became my firm friends. And without asking, I got much help for my work and I am sure to get much more. There is a society watching my work and getting help for it, and four highly respected persons followed me to India to help my work, braving everything and dozens were ready, and the next time I go hundreds will be ! Dear, dear M—, do not be afraid for me.....The world is big, very big, and there must be some place for me even if the 'Yankees rage.'

"Anyhow, I am quite satisfied with my work. I never planned anything. I have taken things as they came. Only one idea was burning in my brain,—to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery, nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken pariah and feeding the starving chandala, and the Lord sends help to me, to them all. 'What are men ?' He is with me, the Beloved, as He was when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about, unknown, from place to place in India. What do I care about what they talk,—the babies—they do not know any better. What ! I, who have realised the Spirit and the vanity of all earthly nonsense to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle ? Do I look like that ?

"I had to talk a lot about myself because I owed that to you. I feel my task is done. At best, three or four years more of life is left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing for certain that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next. And may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe, the sum-total of all souls,—and above all, my God, the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship.

" 'He Who is *in* you and outside of you, Who works through every hand, Who walks through the feet of everyone, Whose body you are, Him worship and break all other idols !'

" 'He Who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent ; break all other idols !'

" 'In Whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going, nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship ; break all other idols !'

"My time is short. I have got to unbreast whatever I have to say, without caring if it smarts some or irritates others. Therefore, my dear M—, do not be frightened at whatever drops from my lips, for the Power

Koviloor Digital Library

behind me is not Vivekananda but He, the Lord, and He knows best. If I have to please the world, that will be injuring the world ; the voice of the majority is wrong, seeing that they govern and make the sad state of the world. Every new thought must create opposition, in the civilised a polite sneer, in the savage, vulgar howls and filthy scandals. Even these earth-worms must stand up erect. Even children must see light.....A hundred waves of prosperity have come and gone over my country. We have learnt the lesson which no child can yet understand. It is vanity, this hideous world is Mâyâ. 'Renounce' and be happy. Give up the ideas of sex and possessions. There is no other road. Marriage and sex and money are the only living devils. All earthly love proceeds from the *body*, *body*, *body*. No sex ! No possessions ! As these fall off, the eyes open to spiritual vision. The soul regains its own infinite power..."

In connection with this matter and as a further explanation of the Swami's attitude towards American women *en masse*, no better evidence of his esteem for them can be adduced than an excerpt from a private letter he had written three years before to the Rajah of Khetri, in regard to "A Few Experiences in This Country" :—

"It is not the building that makes the home,—but it is the wife that makes it,' says a Sanskrit poet, and how true it is ! The roof that affords you shelter from heat and cold and rain is not to be judged by the pillars that support it,—the finest Corinthian columns though they be, but by the real spirit-pillar who is the centre—the real support of the home—the woman. Judged by that standard, the American home will not suffer in comparison with any home in the world.

"I have heard many stories about the American home ; of liberty running into license, of unwomanly women, smashing under their feet all the peace and happiness of the home life in their mad liberty-dance, and much nonsense of that type. And now after a year's experience of the American homes of American women,—how utterly false and erroneous that sort of judgment appears ! American women,—a hundred lives would not be sufficient to pay my deep debt of gratitude to you. I have not words enough to express my gratitude. 'The Oriental hyperbole' alone expresses the depth of Oriental gratitude. 'If the Indian Ocean were an inkstand, the highest mountain of the Himalayas the pen, the earth the scroll, and time itself, the writer, still it will not express my gratitude to you !'

"Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth or learning to recommend me,—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution,—and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to

Koviloor Digital Library

their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother. They have stood my friends even when their own priests were trying to persuade them to give up the 'dangerous heathen',—even when day after day their best friends have told them not to stand by this 'unknown foreigner may be of dangerous character.' But they are better judges of character and soul, they, the noble-minded, the unselfish, the pure,—for it is the pure mirror which catches the reflection.

"And how many beautiful homes I have seen, how many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children is beyond expression, how many daughters and maidens 'pure as the icicle on Diana's temple' and withal with much culture, education and spirituality in the highest sense! Is America then full of only wingless angels in the shape of women? There is good and bad everywhere, true,—but a nation is not to be judged by its weaklings called the wicked, as they are only the weeds which lag behind, but by the good, the noble and the pure, who indicate the national life-current flowing clear and vigorous. Do you judge of an apple tree and the taste of its fruits by the unripe, undeveloped, worm-eaten ones that strew the ground, large even though their number be sometimes? If there is one ripe, developed apple, that *one*! would indicate the powers, the possibility and the purpose of the apple tree, and not the hundreds that could not grow.

"And then the modern American women,—I admire their broad and liberal minds. I have seen many liberal and broad-minded men too in this country, some even in the narrowest churches, but here is the difference; there is danger with the men to become broad at the cost of religion, at the cost of spirituality; women broaden out in sympathy to everything that is good everywhere without losing a bit of their own religion. They intuitively know that it it is a question of positivity and not negativity, a question of addition and not subtraction. They are everyday becoming aware of the fact that it is the affirmative and positive side of everything that shall be stored up, and that this very act of accumulating the affirmative and positive, and therefore soul-building forces of nature, is what destroys the negative and destructive elements in the world....."

One could continue quoting at random passages, both in length and number, descriptive of the Swami's high appreciation of and even esteem for American womanhood. The one quoted, however, gives the spirit which is the keynote to all of them. Though the biographers of the Swami might have overlooked the mention of all these unpleasant controversies and criticisms which were of trifling concern to the

Koviloor Digital Library

Swami himself, these had to be considered, in justice to him, as they created a stir at the time amongst his admirers and sympathisers.

Turning now from these distracting elements of thought, one finds the Swami supremely happy with the sight of one of his *gurubhais* relieving hundreds of the starving and the diseased in the famine-stricken district of Murshidabad in Bengal. Out on his wanderings, the Swami Akhandananda was deeply moved at seeing the wide-spread distress in the villages and, though penniless himself, he at once set to work to do what he could in ameliorating it. On hearing of this, the Swami Vivekananda had sent two of his disciples, Swami Nityananda and Brahmachari Sureshwarananda, to help in the work, and had a fund started at once, in which contributions poured in, chiefly from Calcutta, Benares and Madras, and from the Mahabodhi Society. Daily, for months together, the Swami Akhandananda fed four to five hundred helpless people who were on the verge of death from starvation, besides treating and nursing many who were suffering from malarious fever and cholera, regardless of his own safety. The Government authorities began to appreciate this noble and disinterested work, and besides helping it with men and money granted special facilities for procuring rice at much lower than the current rates. The Swami also had five hundred cloths distributed later on to the receipients of his relief. Mr. E. V. Levinge, the Collector and Magistrate of Murshidabad, who presided on the occasion, expressed his pleasure in doing so and acknowledged the debt of gratitude which, he said, he owed to the Swami Akhandananda for the help he had rendered him in the relief of the distress. The Swami, he said, had managed the matter so well that he, as controlling the Government Relief Fund, had been able to relieve himself of all responsibility with regard to the villages covered by the Swami.

The readers would recognise Swami Akhandananda as the Sannyasin who accompanied Swamiji in his wanderings in the Himalayas. Before that he had crossed and re-crossed the

Koviloor Digital Library

Himalayas four times on his way to and back from Thibet without a single pice with him, even when he was in his teens. He was in Rajputana for several years, when Swamiji was in America, and there under the auspices of the benevolent Chief of Khetri started schools for the education of the poor.

Swamiji was also delighted to learn, at this time, of the success of the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission at Calcutta, and of the Vedanta missionary work that the Swami Ramakrishnananda was carrying on with his characteristic zeal in Madras and its neighbourhood. Arrived there at the end of March, the Swami had made himself deeply popular by his exemplary character and his activities, and had delivered a series of lectures on the Lives of the Prophets, such as, Sri Chaitanya, Ramanuja, Shankara, Madhva, Buddha, Zoroaster and Mohammed, besides other lectures on the Vedanta philosophy and holding classes on the Gita and the Upanishads.

Gradually Swamiji improved in health. The troubles which had afflicted him almost vanished. He was now seriously thinking of going down to the plains to resume his work of teaching and preaching. Miss. F. Henrietta Muller writing of the final part of his stay in Almora says :—

"When the Swami's visit was drawing to a close, his friends in Almora began talking about a lecture. The English residents in the station expressed a wish to hear him, and invited him to give an address at the English Club. The Club room does not hold more than one hundred persons and there were four or five hundred wishing to hear the Swami. In order to give them the opportunities they desired, arrangements were made for two lectures in the Zilla School, and one in the Club. There had been a wish expressed by many persons that one of the lectures should be in Hindi. The language is held to be still in an unformed or undeveloped condition, and does not lend itself readily to modern oratorical style. The lecturer consented to make the attempt for the first time, but quite anticipated to find the Hindi language too inflexible, or at least, unsuitable ; he was therefore prepared to abandon it, and carry on the lecture in English. But from the first it was evident that he was complete master of the situation. He began slowly, and soon warmed to his theme, and found himself building his phrases and almost

Koviloor Digital Library

his words as he went along. Those best acquainted with the difficulties and limitations of the Hindi language as a medium for oratory, expressed their opinion that a triumph had been achieved, probably unique of its kind, as well as profoundly interesting; also, that the teacher had proved by his masterly use of it that the language had in it undreamt-of possibilities of development in the direction of oratory.

"The subject was 'Vedic Teaching in Theory and Practice.' The audience was a highly educated collection of about four hundred persons, who listened with breathless interest and obvious pride to the eloquence and learning of their celebrated fellow-countryman.

"The lecture at the English Club was attended by all the English residents at the station; Col. Pulley of the Goorkhas was in the chair. There were also present, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Gracy, Deputy Commissioner, and Mrs. Gracy, Mrs. Harrison, wife of Col. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. Whishaw, Mr. and Mrs. Larkin, Mr. Spry, Mr. and Mrs. Mcpherson, Lala Badri Sah, Lala Chiranji Lal Sah, Mr. Jwalla Dutt Joshi, and many other personal friends of the Swami and leading residents of Almora.

"A short historical sketch of the rise of the worship of the tribal God, and its spread through conquest of other tribes, was followed by an account of the Vedas. Their nature, character and teaching were briefly touched upon. Then the Swami spoke about the soul, comparing the Western method, which seeks for the solution of vital and religious mysteries in the outside world, with the Eastern method, which finding no answer in nature outside, turns its enquiry within. He justly claimed for his nation the glory of being the discoverers of the introspective method peculiar to themselves, and of having given to humanity the priceless treasures of spirituality, which are the results of that method alone. Passing from this theme, naturally so dear to the heart of a Hindu, the Swami reached the climax of his power as a spiritual teacher when he described the relation of the soul to God, its aspiration and real unity with God. For some time it seemed as though the Teacher, his words, his audience, and the spirit pervading them all, were one. No longer was there any consciousness of 'I' and 'Thou', of 'This' or 'That'. The different units collected there, were for the time being lost and merged in the spiritual radiance which emanated so powerfully from the great Teacher, and held them all, more than spell-bound.

"Those that have frequently heard him will recall and recognise a similar experience,—a moment when he ceases to be Swami Vivekananda lecturing to critical and attentive hearers,—when all details and personalities are lost, names and forms disappear, only the Spirit remains, uniting Speaker, Hearer and Spoken Word."

In Darjeeling and in Almora the Swami led comparatively a retired life, and with the exception of his brief stay in

Koviloor Digital Library

Calcutta following his leaving Darjeeling he was the monk of old in his true atmosphere, the Himalayas. He now regained to some extent his lost health, for a complete recovery, it was not. The disease which had seized him would let go its grip, and whensoever he was in the plains even for as short a time as a month, again his health would be most seriously affected. But health or no health, his mission in India and the delivery of his message to her people necessitated constant work, and the next vision of him is that of whirling to and fro from one province to another, teaching privately, preaching publicly, completing his work,—for now, indeed, he felt it was nearing completion, in so far as his physical personality was concerned.

Koviloor Digital Library

CIV.

THE FURTHER SPREADING OF IDEAS: IN NORTHERN INDIA.

When he had stayed two months and a half in Almora, the Swami desiring to meet pressing invitations to visit various places in the Punjab and Kashmir came down to the plains. After making the hill-journey from Almora to Kathgodam, halting one day at Bhim Tal owing to his having fever, he reached Bareilly on the ninth of August. The Reception Committee composed of the distinguished residents of the city, cordially welcomed him and took him and his party to their club house, where arrangements had been made for their stay. He had hardly arrived there when he was again attacked with fever. He remained in Bareilly four days, and though unwell all the time, he was occupied in frequent religious discourse. On the morning of the tenth he visited the Arya Samaj Orphanage, and on the next day as the result of an impressive conversation with a gathering of students on the need of establishing a Students' Society which might conjointly carry out his ideas of practical Vedanta and work for others, it was formed then and there. The same day after the midday meal he told Swami Achyutananda that he will live only about five or six years more. It was a significant prophetic utterance, though not treated seriously at the time; in as much as he left his body five years later on July 4, 1902.

On the night of the twelfth he left for Umballa, where he stayed for a week. He was met at the station by a large number of residents. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had been at Simla now met him here. During his sojourn he daily held religious conversations at all hours of the day with large numbers of people of different creeds, which in cluded Mohammedan, Brahmo, Arya Samajist and Hindu, on Shâstric

Koviloor Digital Library

and other topics, and won them over completely, specially the Arya Samajists after hot discussions, to his ideas and methods of interpretation of the Vedas. On the evening of the sixteenth at the earnest request of a professor of the Lahore College, who wanted to have a record of Swamiji's voice, he delivered a short lecture into a phonograph brought by the gentleman. Though unwell the next day, he delivered an impressive lecture lasting for an hour and a half before a select gathering of the citizens, who applauded him enthusiastically. All along he injected into the minds of his hearers his plans for the improvement of the Motherland. He discussed Europe, India and America and dwelt much on patriotism, social ethics, the science of religion and on the various modern religious movements in India itself. He did not leave Umballa without visiting the Hindu-Mohammedan School, an institution which interested him, because of its spirit of unity between the two great races in India. While the Swami was at Umballa invitations from various places reached him, but the weakness from the fever which he had contracted at Bhim Tal rendered their acceptance impossible.

On the twentieth the Swami with his party including Mr. and Mrs. Sevier arrived at Amritsar where he was received at the station with great honours ; but he stayed there for only four or five hours at the residence of Mr. Todor Mall, Bar-at-law. He was pressed to remain, but for his increasing ill-health he decided to retire to Dharamsala, a delightful hill-station near by, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. There except talking to casual visitors, he spent the time intervening until the thirty-first, in comparative retirement. About that date he decided once more to return to the plains in order to spread his ideas. Coming back to Amritsar he stayed for two days, during which he had frequent discussions on various religious subjects with Rai Mulraj and other leading Arya Samajists. From there he went to Rawalpindi and though arrangements had been made for his sojourn there, he left immediately for Murree, again in search of health and in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his party. While at this

Koviloor Digital Library

place he was the guest of Mr. Hansraj, a well-known pleader. He was frequently invited to lecture publicly, but his persistent ill-health prevented this. Several conversaziones were held, however, in which he gave out his now-celebrated ideas and plans of work in India, and charmed the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents of the place with singing many religious songs.

His stay in Murree was short, for on the sixth of September he deemed it necessary for many reasons to go on a short visit to Kashmir.

Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had come to Murree with the intention of accompanying the Swami to Kashmir were compelled to remain behind, owing to Mr. Sevier having suddenly fallen ill. The day before the Swami's departure, a letter reached him from Mr. Sevier with this news, and with eight hundred rupees in currency notes enclosed as the sum forwarded to him to meet the expenses of his journey. It was seven o'clock in the evening. He turned to a friend and said with an anxious look, "What shall I do with so much money, Jogesh ? We are Fakirs,— we are sure to spend it all if it be with us. Let me take only half the sum,—I think that ought to be sufficient for me and my brother-Sannyäsins and disciples travelling with me." Saying this he went to see Mr. Sevier, though he was not well at the time, and persuaded him to take back half the money offered.

Leaving Muree, he and his party reached Baramulla by Tonga, on the eighth, whence he started at once for Srinagar by boat. At this place he arrived on the tenth as the guest of Mr. Justice Rishibar Mukhopadhyaya, after a pleasant and refreshing journey, during which he rose frequently to the highest flights of insight in many conversations. At the residence of his host, who was all attention to him, the Swami was literally besieged by numerous Pandits and representative Kashmiris, who had heard of his fame and approached him with supreme reverence. On the third day after his arrival he paid an informal visit to the Palace of the Maharajah, where he was received with marked

Koviloor Digital Library

distinction by two of the higher officials, one of whom, Dr. Mitra, informed him that on the next day Rajah Rama Singh, the brother of the ruling Prince, would be pleased to see him. Swamiji did not meet the Maharajah as he was then at Jammoo.

The audience with Rajah Rama Singh was an event of great significance. The Prince received the Swami with great cordiality and honour making him take his seat on a chair, while he himself sat with the officials on the floor. The interview continued for two hours, many subjects concerning religion and the rehabilitation of the masses being touched upon. The Rajah was deeply impressed, and expressed an earnest desire to help the Swami in carrying out his plans of work.

Until the time when he returned to Murree, early in the first week of October, the Swami was busy filling many engagements, of both a private and public character, and visiting places of historic interest with which Kashmir abounds. Sâdhus, Pandits, Vidyarthis, officials of high rank and scores of citizens visited him at the house of his host, as though it were a Tirtha. Religious discourses were held there morning and evening and at any time of the day. Whenever he could be free he retired to the house-boat which the Wazir of Raja Amar Singh had placed at his disposal. The Wazir himself became an ardent admirer of the Swami. He was often invited by the nobility of the town to dine at their houses, and on one of these occasions he held discourse with many Brahmanas and Pandits assembled there. The latter welcomed Swamiji with showers of flowers and putting garlands round his neck in a spirit of adoration, and finally escorted him back to his home. The Swami also made frequent excursions by boat to near-by places, or visited the bazaars, or listened to singing and instrumental music with which many gentlemen entertained him. On the twentieth of September, he went out on a trip from Srinagar, in his house-boat, and visited Pampur, and Anantanag, where he saw the historic temple of Vijbera, and then made his way afoot to Martanda, at which place he

Koviloor Digital Library

stayed at the *Dharmasala*, or the rest-house for pilgrims, and discoursed learnedly to a large gathering of *pândâs*. Thence he set out for Acchabal. On the way he was shown a temple, which legend relates to the Pandava times. He was most enthusiastic in admiring the exquisite workmanship of this edifice, and stated that it was at least older than two thousand years. From Acchabal he returned to Srinagar,

Slowly the Swami wended his way back from this interesting place, by boat from the Uhlar Lake, to Baramulla. Though there was a direct *tonga* service from Srinagar to Baramulla, he chose the other route in order to enjoy its charming sceneries. All along the route of travel he would regale his companions with his merry talks and sparkling *bon mots*. The beauty of Kashmir and its ruins and historic sites delighted the artist and historian in him. The hours at the halting-places were filled with illuminating discourses of varied character, now historic, now national, and generally religious. The delightful climate and the free out-door life restored him much and he felt some of his old vigour and power.

Returning to Murree he was hailed with rejoicings by the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents of the place, and by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. Here the Swami was alternately the guest of the latter, and of Nibaran Babu, at whose house he received numerous visitors and held many conversations. On the evening of October the fourteenth an address of welcome was presented to him in a meeting on behalf of the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents of Murree. The Swami in reply delivered a neat little speech which delighted the audience immensely.

Day after next he came down to Rawalpindi and was cordially welcomed by the distinguished citizens who followed him to the house of his host, Mr. Hansraj. Here he was very much pleased, after a talk, with the Swami Prakashananda of the Arya Samaj. Mr. Justice Narayan Das, Mr. Bhaktaram, Bar-at-law, and many other educated gentlemen were present.

Koviloor Digital Library

He had hardly been there two days when he lectured to a considerable audience in the beautiful garden of Mr. Sujan Singh, who was the President of the meeting For two hours Swamiji discoursed most lucidly on Hinduism by supporting it with apt quotations from the Vedas. Warming to his subject, he would now instill into the minds of his listeners great strength and force by dwelling in a masterly way on the infinite glory and almighty power of the Atman, then at another time he would rouse laughter among the audience by his witty and trenchant sarcasm at some of the queer customs that prevailed in modern Hindu society. Everyone's heart was fired with emotion and enthusiasm at hearing the lecture. An English disciple who was present says, "Swamiji sometimes strolling in the course of his lecture as was his wont, and sometimes leaning against a pillar near-by decorated with foliage, wreaths and flowers, and himself wearing a beautiful wreath of flowers on his head and a garland round his neck, looked in his flowing saffron-coloured robe and sash like a Greek god. Moreover, as a background to this, the audience mostly sitting on the lawn, turbaned and cross-legged, with the sun setting in the distance, made altogether a wondrously picturesque scene."

One catches a glimpse of the intense activity of the Swami at this time, or indeed during most of the time that he was before the public, through the entry made on this date, in the diary of a devoted companion, which reads :—

"*17th October.* In the morning, Swamiji talks on religious subjects with the visitors at Mr. Hansraj's house. Then he went to the Cantonment to keep an invitation to dinner at Nimai Babu's house, where he talked on religious subjects with the Bengalee gentlemen assembled there. He returned from there at about 3 P. M. After a short rest he went to Mr. Sujan Singh's garden to deliver a lecture on Hinduism..... Returning from there he instructed a gentleman in the secret of performing *Sâdhanâs*. At night he went to supper at Mr. Bhaktaram's house in the company of Mr. Justice Narayandas, Swami Prakashananda, Mr. Hansraj and others. From there he returned home at 10 P. M., and discussed with Swami Prakashananda until three o'clock in the morning."

On the next day in the course of conversation with the leading residents of the city, among whom was the Swami

Koviloor Digital Library

Prakashananda, he gave most satisfactory suggestion of solving the problem of antagonism between the Arya Samaj and the Mohammedans. During his stay at Rawalpindi he made several visits to the Kali temple, received and entertained many visitors belonging to different provinces, and held several important conversaziones at the residence of Mr. Hansraj and also at the bungalow of Mr and Mrs. Sevier. On the day of his departure, when he was talking with the visitors after dinner, one of his *gurubhais* brought a phaeton for him and said that a Bengalee gentleman was ill and that he earnestly wanted to see him. Swamiji was ready to go at once. With him went Swami Prakashananda and a few others. The Bengalee gentleman put five questions to Swamiji and said that, if he did not receive satisfactory answers to them he would become an atheist. The Swami took each question, one after another, thrashed them out minutely with great discriminative insight, and gave his conclusions on them in such a way that the gentleman was fully satisfied and convinced.

On the night of the twentieth of October he was again off, this time to Jammoo in the Jammoo State of the Maharajah of Kashmir, who was then living there, and whither the Maharajah and the prominent residents had invited him. He was met officially at the station and informed that he was a guest of State. Babu Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya, the official in whose charge was the entertainment of the State-guests, was all attention to the Swami in looking after his comforts and treated him with great reverence. The Rajah's Library was visited in the evening, and on the day following, besides conversing for some hours with Kailasânanda Swami, Mahesh Babu's Guru, and many Punjabee gentlemen, the Swami had a long talk with Mahesh Babu with reference to the establishment of a monastery somewhere in Kashmir.

On the twenty-third he had a long interview with the Maharajah, who had sent a phaeton to convey him to the palace. There were present the two brothers of the Maharajah and principal officers of the State. A special seat was given to

Koviloor Digital Library

Swamiji. First of all, on being asked by the Maharajah about the path of Sannyâsa he gave a suitable reply. And in the course of the conversation he proved the foolishness of adhering to meaningless customs and outward observances, and traced the national servility of the last seven hundred years, to the misconception of true religious ideals and to the blind following of all sorts of superstitions. He said, "By committing that which is real sin, such as adultery &c., one is not outcasted in these days,—now all sin, all offence to society is, relating to food only!" Swamiji then defended sea-voyage with his usual vigour and pointed out that without travelling in foreign countries real education was not gained. Finally he dwelt upon the significance of preaching the Vedanta in Europe and America and upon his own mission and plan of work in India. He concluded with saying, "I deem it a great good fortune, if by doing good to my country I have to go to hell!" The Maharajah and others were highly pleased with the interview, which lasted for nearly four hours.

Later in the day he paid a visit to the junior Rajah who received him with equal distinction. A long conversation ensued. On the next day a deputation from the residents of Sialkote came to the Swami at Jammoo with a pressing invitation to visit that place. On the same day, he delivered a public lecture, which pleased the Maharajah so much that he asked the Swami to deliver another lecture the next day, and further expressed the desire that he might remain at least ten or twelve days longer and address meetings every other day. On the twenty-fifth the Swami inspected the municipal power-house, held discussions on religious subjects, talked about the Arya Samaj, in which he pointed out its shortcomings to Swami Achyutananda in a friendly spirit, and deplored the backwardness in knowledge of the Punjabees. He also conversed in the morning on Vedanta and the Unconditioned Infinite. In the afternoon, according to the wishes of the Maharajah, he lectured to a large audience for two hours dealing with all the Shâstras from the Vedas to the Purans, and then speaking on the *Bhakti Mârga*. He

Koviloor Digital Library

then paid a visit to the library and saw the illumination of the city on the occasion of the Dewali festival.

The next three days were devoted mostly to the reception of visitors, and in talks with them he gave out many important ideas on the profound truths relating to religion and social ethics. Thus, speaking on the latter he said that everyone should have equal privileges and opportunities of development, and that, consequently, all exclusiveness or comparative privileges claimed by virtue of the differences in caste by birth or by qualities should be abolished. "If a comparison is made," he continued, "between the caste by qualities and that by birth, we find that the latter has some very weighty considerations to commend it. In caste by birth, a person however qualified and rich he may become, cannot forsake his own caste. Accordingly his own caste gets benefited, to a certain extent, by his wealth and attainments. But this is not possible in caste by qualities." Then he talked on Bacon's Moral Science and on the necessity of self-sacrificing work, without looking for name and fame, without caring for praise or blame. In the course of dwelling on the latter topic he mentioned casually that even from boyhood he was accustomed to go into the slums of the untouchables notwithstanding the remonstrances of friends and relatives, and try to do them good.

On the twenty-ninth of October the Swami paid a final visit to the Maharajah and informed him of his proposed departure for Sialkote. The Prince parted from the Swami with much regret, telling him, however, that whensoever he would visit Jammoo or Kashmir it would be as his own personal guest.

During the present tour the Swami delivered lectures mostly in Hindi, which are unfortunately lost to us because of the impracticability of reporting them in shorthand. The power and life that he put into the Hindi language was so unique that the Maharajah of Kashmir requested him to write several papers in that language, which he did and presented them to him. They were highly appreciated by the Maharajah.

Koviloor Digital Library

Taking up the thread of the Swami's history from this time until he left Lahore for Dehra Dun, Mr. J. J. Goodwin who had accompanied the Swami on his Jammoo trip, writes as follows :—

"Although by no means restored to health the Swami Vivekananda is in active work again, this time in the North-West. After a visit of some weeks to Kashmir, where his views secured the favourable consideration of H. H. the Maharajah, and assurances of his support in the event of practical work being undertaken in the district, the Swami paid a short visit to Jammoo, lecturing there in Hindi to a most appreciative audience. From Jammoo he went to Sialkote (Punjab) as the guest of Lala Mool Chand, M. A., L. L. B., and two lectures were arranged for him, one in English, and one in Hindi. In the English lecture he again described the basis upon which he looked hopefully for a united religious India. The Hindi lecture was on *Bhakti*, and was addressed more particularly to 'the people'. One theme was common to all these lectures, as to all which have since followed, that religion must be practical to be religion at all. The Swami seems daily to be becoming more emphatic on this point, and is enforcing his views by starting works of various kinds which seem to suit the needs of the places he visits and the characteristics of their people. Thus, at Sialkote, he strongly urged the establishment of an educational institution for girls, and as the result of his two days' visit a committee was afterwards formed of most of the influential men of the town, with Lala Mool Chand as Secretary, to at once give the proposal practical effect.

"Lahore was next visited, and the Swami was received at the Station by a large crowd, including many of the members of the Sanatana Dharma Samaj, in whose hands the reception was left. He was driven through the picturesque streets of the city, after being garlanded, to Raja Dhyan Singh's Palace, and afterwards put up with Babu N. N. Gupta, the Editor of the *Tribune* of Lahore. On the Friday evening, he lectured in the large courtyard of the old palace on 'The Problem Before Us'. The numbers present were so large that the space available was altogether too small to accommodate all who wished to hear, and the necessity for disappointing many at one time threatened to prevent the holding of the meeting at all. After at least two thousand had had to be turned away, however, there still remained fully four thousand, who listened to an excellent discourse, in which the Swami insisted on Religion being the only groundwork upon which the Indian nation could be regenerated. He pointed out too that the Vedas were the common property, as well as that they held the common reverence, of

Koviloor Digital Library

the whole nation. With the Vedas as the basis it was possible to find a unity among the complicated sectarian variety in India, but it was necessary to recognise that although sects must remain, sectarianism must go. On the following Tuesday, another large crowd gathered in the Pandal of Prof. Bose's Bengal Circus, to hear the Swami lecture on *Bhakti*. He defended the Puranas from attacks often made against them, and claimed that neither they nor any other Sacred Books in India held that they preached the highest form of Religion. Their very existence, however, proved their necessity ; and both historically and by comparison he pointed out that every nation and every religion required the help of some sort of material objects in bringing men to God. He strongly condemned those who were so illiberal as to forbid idol-worship, while at the same time he had no sympathy with those who would force every man to be a worshipper of idols. The best form of worship in these days was to see Shiva represented in living men, and specially in the poor. He would like to see every man each day take a hungry Narayana, or a lame Narayana or a blind Narayana, or six, or twelve, as their means permitted, into their own homes, there to feed them, and to offer them the same worship which they would give to Shiva or to Vishnu in the temple. He had seen charity in many lands and the reason for its ill-success was that it was not given in a proper spirit. 'Here, take this and go away', was an entire misconception of what charity should be, and had a bad effect alike on the giver and the receiver. They in India should specially remember, that according to their religion the receiver was greater than the giver. because for the time being the receiver was God Himself. Charity, nowadays was forced and selfish—given with the idea of gaining a name, or winning the applause of the world.

"The third lecture, on the following Friday evening, was a triumphant success. The arrangements, this time entirely made by students of the four Lahore Colleges, were exceedingly good, and the audience, without being inconveniently large, was in every sense representative. The subject for the evening was Vedanta, and the Swami for over two hours gave, even for him, a masterly exposition of the monistic philosophy and religion of India. The manner in which, at the outset, he traced the psychological and cosmological ideas on which religion in India is founded, was marvellously clear, and his insistence that Advaita was alone able to meet the attacks not only of science but also of Buddhism and agnosticism against religious and transcendental ideas, was conveyed in definite language and was full of convincing power. From beginning to end the lecture preached strength—belief in man in order that belief in God might follow—and every word of perhaps the finest lecture the Swami has given in India was itself

Koviloor Digital Library

full of strength. This was just as marked when he urged that Advaita was alone able not only to preach morality, but to explain it, and he indignantly refuted the idea that Advaita was either impractical or dangerous. • • • The lecture created great enthusiasm and the Swami found it in no way difficult to induce a number of students, who were his constant attendants while in Lahore, to take steps to put it into practice. In fact, he held a meeting for students, at which, after hearing his suggestions, an association was thereupon formed, purely unsectarian in its character, the work of which, as it gradually unfolds itself, shall be to help the poor—and where possible by searching them out in every district of the town,—to nurse the sick poor, and to give night education to the ignorant poor. The idea has been taken up with so much enthusiasm that I do not doubt its ultimate success. In conversation with the students, the Swami over and over again told them that it was necessary to build character in India. The present system of education here crammed their heads with facts but paid no attention to the moral man. Character could only be gained by practice, and the best practice for them was on the lines suggested as the work of the association. This practice of helping others in any way that offered for the tendering of help, would tend in time to make them naturally charitable, and then—when it was their very nature to think of others and to abhor selfishness—they might be said to possess character.

"Two days later, the Swami left for Dehra Dun, again on business, although he will not lecture there, and from there he will proceed to Jeypore, probably visiting Delhi and Agra on the way."

Commenting on his success in Lahore, the *Brahmavadin* in its December issue thus speaks of the Swami :—

"The visit of the Swami Vivekananda to Lahore was in every sense a pleasure. It began with a warm welcome being accorded him at the railway station, on his arrival from Jammoo, and it ended with equal regrets being showered after him as he left for Dehra Dun after a stay of ten days. It was a busy time for him too.....He has begun well in the Punjab by impressing people holding apparently diametrically opposed views with his earnestness and his ability to do much to assist in the regeneration of Hinduism. To the leaders of the Arya Samaj he was especially grateful for the kindness they invariably showed for him and the practical help they accorded to his own eminently practical ideas."

His unsectarianism was especially evident in Lahore, for though he was pressed by a certain community of the orthodox Hindus to preach openly against the Arya Samajists he would not lend himself to their wishes. He did, however,

Koviloor Digital Library

consent, at their request, to deliver a lecture on *Shrâddha*, in which the Arya Samajists disbelieve, but in doing so he in no wise wanted to attack them. The lecture did not come about publicly as arranged, but took the form of a conversazione in which were present some of the leading members of both the rival parties. He eloquently discussed on the necessity and uses of the Hindu rite of performing *Shrâddha*, and defended it in a dignified manner against the attacks made by some Arya Samajists who came forward to argue with him. In tracing the origin of that time-honoured institution, Swamiji said that spirit-worship was the beginning of Hindu religion. At first the Hindus used to invoke the spirits of their departed ancestors in some man, and then worship and offer him food. By and by it was found that the men who acted as mediums for these disembodied spirits suffered very much physically afterwards. So they gave up the practice and substituted instead an effigy of grass *(Kushaputtali)*, and invoking the departed spirits of their ancestors in it offered to it worship and *pindas*. The Vedic invocation of the Devas for worship and sacrifice, he pointed out, was a development of this spirit-worship. Be that as it may, Swamiji's mission in the Punjab was, pre-eminently, to establish harmony and peace in place of discord and rivalry among the parties holding diverging views on some of the important points of Hinduism, such as, the Arya Samajists who stood for re-interpreted Hinduism, and the Sanatanists who represented the orthodox Hindu community. That he succeeded in bringing about this most desirable thing, at least for the time being, is evidenced from the fact that the former vied with the latter in showing their enthusiasm and regard for him and flocked to him in numbers to listen to his words. Indeed, so generous was his own attitude to the Arya Samajists and so respectful their feeling for him, that for some days there was a persistent rumour to the effect that several of the leading Arya Samajists desired that the Swami should be requested to become the head of the Samaj itself.

Koviloor Digital Library

As has been mentioned, the subject of the Swami's first lecture in Lahore was, "The Problem Before Us." Owing to the immense gathering of people to hear him, the lecture could not be given in the hall of the old palace and an open-air meeting had to be held. But even then, speaking for an hour and a half at the top of his voice he could not make himself sufficiently heard, because of the enthusiastic uproar and the eagerness of the vast crowd constantly pressing closer round him. He had, consequently, to cut short his speech and stop. As he could not deal with all the points of the subject he had in view, it was published under the name of "The Common Bases of Hinduism," (See "Complete Works," pp. 695—704). At the next lecture that he gave in the pavilion of Prof. Bose's Circus on *Bhakti*, he was requested by Moti Babu, the proprietor, not to continue his lecture too long, indeed, he was asked to stop at 8 P.M., as that was a day of performance at night. When Swamiji had spoken for some time and had not as yet gone much into the subject proper in considering it in its details, he noticed Moti Babu taking out his watch to see the time. Swamiji mistook this to be a hint for him to stop, and so with a few concluding words he sat down abruptly. Thus Swamiji was not at all satisfied with either of his lectures. He however made it up by his last lecture on "Vedanta," which is one of the best of all the lectures that he delivered in the whole of his career.

In one of the conversations Swamiji deplored the lack of emotion in the Punjabees, remarking that the Land of the Five Rivers was rather a dry place, spiritually, and hence the minds of the people should be made responsive to the softer elements of religion by the culture of *Bhakti*. He thought that the introduction of the system of Sri Chaitanya's *Sankirtana*, as it is in vogue among the Vaishnavas of Bengal, would be a desirable thing. A proposal was made by some of the Punjabee gentlemen, that there should be a public *Sankirtana* procession, and it was enthusiastically received by Swamiji and the Bengalee residents of the City, Swamiji

Koviloor Digital Library

expressing the desire that he would himself join the procession on foot. He asked the Bengalees to make elaborate arrangements for flags and other things, in order to celebrate it on a grand scale. But it was communicated to him later, that the only *mridanga* which was with them being left in neglect and not used for a long time, burst as soon as it was beat upon. Swamiji was disconsolate at having had to give up the idea of the procession.

It was in Lahore that the Swami met Mr. Tirtha Ram Goswami, then a professor in mathematics at one of the Lahore Colleges, who is now widely celebrated as the late Swami Ram Tirtha and who later, following the Swami's example, preached Vedantism in America and gained a considerable following, both there and at home. It was under his guidance that the college students of Lahore did much in helping to arrange for the public lectures which the Swami gave there. Personally he admired the Swami immensely and invited him and his disciples including Mr. Goodwin, to dine at his residence. After the dinner the Swami sang a song which begins with : "*Jahan Ram wuhan kam nahin, jahan kam, nahin Ram*", which translated reads : "Where God-consciousness is, there is no desire ; where desire is, there is no God-consciousness." Tirtha Ram himself writes : "His melodious voice made the meaning of the song thrill through the hearts of many present." His host placed his private library at the disposal of the Swami, but of the numerous volumes the latter chose only "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman, whom he was accustomed to call "The Sannyâsin of America."

One evening Tirtha Ram with a party of young men, and the Swami with his *gurubhais* were walking together along a public highway. The party broke into several groups. "In the hinder group," according to Swami Ram Tirtha's own words, in a letter written later from Darjeeling, "in answer to a question I was explaining : 'An ideal Mahatman is one who has lost all sense of separate personality and lives as the Self of all. When the air in any region absorbs enough

Koviloor Digital Library

of solar heat, and being rarefied, rises higher, lo, the whole atmospheric air is set in motion thereby, and wind begins to blow from all directions to occupy the vacated space. So a Mahatma does marvellously refine the whole nation through Self-reform.' The Swami's group happening to be silent at the time, he overheard this part of our conversation and stopped suddenly on the way and emphatically remarked, 'Such was my Guru, Paramahamsa Ramakrishna Deva.' "

The relationship between the Swami and Tirtha Ram was most cordial, and before he left the latter presented him with a gold watch. The Swami took it very kindly, but putting it back in Rama's pocket said, "Very well, friend, I shall wear it here in this pocket."

A touchingly human incident occurred at Lahore, when Motilal Bose, the owner of Professor Bose's Circus, who had been an old neighbour and playmate of the Swami, came to meet him. He was awe-struck at the reverence which hundreds were paying to him. Feeling a little embarrassed he approached the Swami with the question, "How shall I address you now, as Noren or as Swamiji ?" The Swami replied, "Have you gone mad, Moti ? Don't you know I am the same Noren, and you are the same Moti ?" Indeed, everyone of his old comrades and class-mates who met him in the days of his glory, after his return from the West, speaks of having noticed not the slightest change in his ways and behaviour, so far as youthful recollections went. He would receive them and speak with them, even when surrounded by scores of adoring visitors, with the same freedom and intimacy as in the days of his school life. Thus, to quote one instance among many, when Upendra Babu, another classmate of his, to whom he had prophesied his own future greatness when studying in the Presidency College of Calcutta, came to meet him at Balaram Babu's house, Swamiji seeing him enter the room stood up and with outstretched arms embraced him warmly in the presence of some fifty gentlemen to whom he had been talking at the time. Swamiji's

Koviloor Digital Library

treatment of him recalled, as Upendra Babu says, the sweet relationship of the days when they were at school. It was remarkable how Swamiji recognised his friends and acquaintances even if he had not seen them from his boyhood. Or for the matter of that, he did not even forget faces seen once in his life, and would easily recall the exact time and surroundings in which he had met them, perhaps for a moment years ago.

It was the state of the Swami's health which largely affected his leaving Lahore, after ten days of strenuous work, for Dehra Dun. The return to the heat of the plains seems to have caused a relapse of the illness which took him to the Himalayas, and he was in consequence forced to postpone his further lecture tour. At Dehra Dun he led a quiet life for some ten days, but he was never idle. Gathering his disciples about him he would hold a Sanskrit class on Ramanuja's Bhashya on the Brahma Sutras. He never gave it up during the rest of his present travels. Even on the way to Khetri, after they had rested from the journey and had had their bath and meal, he would call them and begin the Sanskrit class. He also held classes on the Sankhya philosophy and appointed the Swami Achyutananda to teach it in his presence. Sometimes when even Swami Achyutananda, who was a very learned Sanskrit scholar, could not make out the meaning of a certain text, Swamiji would in a few words explain it very clearly, which used to surprise the former. He was interested at Dehra Dun, as he was also in Kashmir and in Dharamsala, to purchase a tract of land whereon to establish an institution for the training of Brahmacharins. He had also constantly in mind the founding of an institute for Hindu girls and widows, a plan which did not ripen until much later.

While he was at Dehra Dun he received constant invitations to Khetri. The Rajah of that State was exceedingly anxious to give his subjects an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Swami's ideas. Besides, personally, he was most eager to see the Swami, the latter

Koviloor Digital Library

being his Guru. So the Swami started from Dehra Dun for Rajputana. On the way he visited Delhi, Agra, Alwar and Jeypore. At Delhi he was the guest of Notu Krishna, a man in humble position, whom he had met in his Parivrajaka days at Hathras. Wealthy residents of Delhi pressed him to become their guest, but he preferred remaining with his old friend. At Delhi he held a long conversazione at which many distinguished persons were present.

Together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his *gurubhais* and disciples, he visited all the memorable ruins and monuments of the past glories of the Moghul Emperors, which are scattered all round Delhi within a radius of a few miles. He delighted the party with his brilliant remarks concerning Moghul and Hindu architecture and history. Says one who accompanied him : "He vivified the past before us. Indeed, we forgot the present in the past and lived with dead Emperors and mighty Kings of old." At Agra it was a similar experience, and the same speaker says : "He walked amongst the historic sites with an imperial air. And from the graphic way in which he told of Akbar and of Shajahan, it seemed as if he himself were recollecting his own past memories."

Swamiji then went to Alwar where he was accorded a grand and cordial reception. During his sojourn there, he was lodged with his disciples in one of the residences belonging to the Maharajah, which had been secured by the Swami's followers in Alwar for the purpose. He had several interviews with the principal officials, the Maharajah being at the time unavoidably absent from the State. But the chief attraction of his visit lay in meeting once again his intimate friends and disciples with whom he had passed many a day of his dear Parivrajaka life. His present visit was full of touching episodes which reveal the true Sannyasin, the man of the people that he was. For instance, alighting at the railway station, when the reception ceremony was going on and he was surrounded by most of the big men, he espied one of his devoted disciples

Koviloor Digital Library

of poor means, standing at a distance, dressed in a humble way. Swamiji without caring for the formalities of reception or for etiquette called aloud, "Ramasnehi ! Ramasnehi !" —for that was the name of the man— and having had him brought before him through the crowd of the notables, enquired of his welfare and that of his other friends, and talked with him freely as of old. This instance brings to mind a similar occurrence in Madras. During the procession, the Swami, while seated in his carriage of honour, saw the Swami Sadananda standing amidst the huge mass that crowded the streets. He at once shouted out : "Come, Sadananda Baba ! Come, my boy !" And he made this disciple sit with him in the same carriage.

During his stay his former acquaintances flocked to him, and with them Swamiji spent many pleasant hours in discoursing on his experiences in the West and on his plans of work in India. What struck them most was the fact that though he had come to them now with a world-wide name and fame, he was the same simple Sannyasin and loving companion, with his heart aglow with spiritual fire, untouched by conceit and unspoiled by worldly honour.

Among the daily invitations to dinner that was possible for him to accept with his disciples during the short stay in that historic city was one from an old woman, who felt herself honoured for having entertained Swamiji to *bhikshâ* at her house in his former visit. But in her case, Swamiji invited himself sending word to her to say that he longed to have those thick *chapatis* (unleavened bread) that he had had from her hands years ago ! Her heart danced with joy as she heard these words, and her eyes were filled with tears. When she was serving her guests she said to Swamiji, "Poor as I am, where shall I get delicacies to give you, my son, howsoever I may wish !" Swamiji took the simple meal at her house with the greatest relish and delight, and in the course of it said to his disciples more than once, "Look here ! How devout, how motherly this old woman is ! How *satvic* are these thick *chapatis* done by herself !" Swamiji knowing that her

Koviloor Digital Library

family was very poor and remembering her past kindness to him, thrust into the hand of the guardian of the house, notwith-standing his remonstrances, a hundred-rupee note unbeknown to her.

In reporting Swamiji's visit to Khetri, the Swami Sadananda writes as follows to the *Brahmavadin* on December the twelfth :—

"...His Highness the Rajah of Khetri ordered all the necessary and convenient arrangements on the way from Khetri to Jeypore, and himself drove a distance of twelve miles to receive the Swami. The whole town of Khetri was filled with joy and enthusiasm. The citizens arranged for a grand dinner and brilliant illumination and fire-works in honour of his Highness' successful return from his travels in England and on the Continent, as well as for the advent of Swamiji, whose arrival on such an occasion was looked upon as a Godsend, and doubled the enthusiasm in the hearts of the whole public. His Highness and the Swami were presented with addresses to which were given suitable replies....

"On the eleventh of December there was an assemblage in the school premises where both the Raja and the Swami were given numerous addresses from different committees. The Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, the Education Department, Khetri, and the local Young Men's Debating Club, were among those who presented addresses to the Rajah. Then, after many short poems, some of them especially composed in honour of the Rajah, were recited by the young boys of the school, Swamiji distributed the prizes to the meritorious students at the request of the President, the Rajah. The school authorities had thought it fit to avail themselves of this opportunity for their annual prize distribution. The Rajahji made a brief reply to the addresses presented to him, thanking especially the Ramakrishna Mission, for the chief of the Mission was present there ..... Afterwards, Swamiji delivered a brief speech with his usual fluency, in which he thanked the Rajah and spoke of him highly, saying that what little he had done for the improvement of India would not have been done if he had not met him. He then compared the Western and the Eastern ideals of education and said, that while the ideal of the former was worldly enjoyment, that of the latter was renunciation; he advised the young men of Khetri to stick to the Eastern ideal and not to get dizzy by the glamour of Western ideals. Education, he said, was the bringing out of the Divinity which was already in man, and so in educating the children we should have abundant faith in the child; we must believe that every child is a reservoir of Infinite Divine power, and we must try to rouse that sleeping Brahman within him. The next point

Koviloor Digital Library

we should remember in educating the children, he said, is that we should encourage originality of thought in them. The want of this, he pointed out, was the cause of the present degraded state of India. 'None can educate another,' he said. 'The boy educates himself, the teacher only helps the growth which is always of its own nature'. If the children be educated in the way he suggested, they would become *men* and would be able to solve their own problems in the struggle of life. Then, after a vote of thanks to the chair, the meeting dispersed."

At the reception meeting, his subjects presented the Rajah, as is customary on such occasions, with five trays full of gold Mohurrs, the greater part of which he gave away to educational institutions in his State. Then all the officials and subjects present came before Swamiji, one by one, in turn, bowed and presented him with two rupees each. This function lasted for two hours. At the time of leaving Khetri the Rajah gave Swamiji three thousand rupees which was sent to the Math in charge of Swamis Sadananda and Sachchidananda (senior).

On the twentieth of December, the Swami delivered a lecture on "Vedantism", in the hall of the Maharajah's bungalow which is beautifully situated at the top of a hill, and in which he lodged with his disciples. The audience consisted of the principal gentlemen of the place. Some European ladies and gentlemen were likewise present. The Swami was introduced by the Rajah, who was the president of the meeting, and spoke for more than an hour and a half. He was at his best. He began the lecture by comparing the two great civilisations of yore, namely, the Greek and the Aryan. He then traced the influence of Indian thought on Europe, in Pythogoras, Socrates, Plato and the Egyptian neo-Platonists, and showed how the same had been the case with Spain, Germany and other European countries at different periods of history down to our own times. He then discussed the Vedas and the Vedic mythology and proceeded to explain the different ideas and stages of worship found therein, in course of which he pointed out that behind them all stood as the background the shining idea,—एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।— "That which exists is One ; sages call It variously." Continuing he said that, unlike the Greeks, the Aryans dissatis-

Koviloor Digital Library

fied with what the external nature had to teach, had gone into the Inner Self, and solved the problem of life in the light of Self-realisation. Then the Swami passed on to the Dualistic, Qualified-monistic, and the Advaitic theories, and reconciled them by saying that each one of these was like a step to higher and higher realisations, till the final evolution to Advaitism was the natural outcome, the last step being "*Tattvamasi*"—"Thou art That." He deplored the system of text-torturing, of which even the greatest Bhashyakaras were guilty. Ramanuja had distorted the Advaita texts of the Upanishads, while Sankara had done the same with the Dvaita texts. Proceeding further, Swamiji regretted that in modern India, "The people are neither Hindus, nor Vedantins, —they are merely don't-touchists; the kitchen is their temple, and cooking-pots, their object of worship. This state of things must go. The sooner it is given up, the better for our religion. Let the Upanishads shine in their glory, and at the same time let not quarrels exist among the different sects."

As Swamiji was not keeping good health, he felt exhausted at this stage of his speech; so he took a little rest of half an hour, during which time the whole audience waited patiently to hear the rest of the lecture. He came out and spoke again for another half hour, and explained that knowledge was the finding of unity in diversity, and that the highest point in every science was reached when it found the one unity underlying all variety, and this was as true in physical science as in the spiritual. The Swami did not close his address without referring to the noble character of the Rajah who, as a true Kshattriya, had assisted him so materially in spreading the Eternal Truths of Hinduism in the West. The lecture created a lasting impression on the people of Khetri.

To the Swami at Khetri work was both pleasure and rest. Besides lecturing and attending to public functions in his honour he spent the time in riding, sight-seeing and pleasant talks with his companions and his royal disciple. An incident which shows the true Kshattriya spirit of the Rajah of Khetri occurred when he and the Swami were once out riding. The

Koviloor Digital Library

Swami noticed the Rajah's hand bleeding profusely, and found that the wound had been caused by a thorny branch which the Rajah had held aside for him to pass. When he expostulated, the Rajah laughed the matter off. "Are we not always the Defenders of the Faith, Swamiji ?" he asked.

When the time for his departure came, the Maharajah of Khetri, loath to part from his beloved Guru, accompanied him as far as Jeypore. There a meeting was held in the premises of a temple, with the Maharajah of Khetri as the President, at which Swamiji gave a lecture to an appreciative audience of five hundred persons. From Jeypore he sent away all his disciples to the Math at Belur, except keeping with him one, Brahmachari Krishnalal, as his attendant.

Next the Swami is seen passing rapidly through Kishengarh, Ajmere, Jodhpur, and Indore on his way to Khandwa. At Jodhpur he was the guest of the Prime Minister, Rajah Sir Pratap Singh, for about ten days. At each of the places named above he was met at the station by enthusiastic crowds, and entertained by distinguished persons, to whom he communicated his ideas. But he was by no means well. When he arrived at Khandwa in Indore to become the guest of Babu Haridas Chatterjee, a pleader who had known him previous to his going to the West, he was, to use that gentleman's words, "restless with high fever." In speaking of the Swami he writes further as follows :—

"I did all I could to make him recover soon, which fortunately he did. He stayed for eight or ten days. In relating his experiences, and in his religious discourse to the large numbers who came to see him, he used to lay particular stress on the steadiness of character of the British, and remarked that if India was to rise, help and co-operation of a solid nature could be expected from England and England alone.

"The night before he left me I pressed him, when all had retired and he was alone, to give me initiation. I firmly held his feet and implored him to give me *mantram*, but he would not. He said he did not care for making *chelas*, or raising the standard of religious or social Gurudom. Pedagogues, he said, have never done good service to their country or their causes. He advised me, however, to remember the simple truth so often repeated, that man can do what man has done. Man's

Koviloor Digital Library

constitution embodies divine omnipotence. This should be realised and set up as the model of all human action."

Swamiji must have had reasons of his own in not gratifying the earnest and pious desire of his kind host, for it is a fact that he made disciples before and after, though not without making a thorough study of their personalities. As a true teacher he gave special instructions to different individuals according to their religious temperament and tendencies. Thus to one he would speak of *Bhakti*, to another of *Jnanam*, as the highest ideal, but he would insist on all to stand on their own feet and rely on themselves if they wanted to bring into fruition the highest possibilities of their nature. As regards his own disciples and companions, he counselled them, when travelling in the Punjab and Rajputana, to be orthodox in their ways and to abstain altogether from meat-eating, saying, "If you be a strict vegetarian for twelve years without a break, you will be *Siddhapurushas* (perfected souls)."

Leaving Khandwa the Swami went as far as Rutlam Junction, but owing to indifferent health and other causes he was bound to give up his idea of extending his preaching tour to Guzerat, Baroda and other places of the Bombay Presidency, whence telegrams and letters of invitation poured in upon him. He decided therefore to return once more to Calcutta and rest and work at one and the same time, if such a condition of personality were possible ; but with him it was possible. So the next vision of the Swami is in Calcutta where he adds further to the consolidation of his mission and the spread of his ideas. On his way back he met with a most enthusiastic reception at the Jubbulpore railway station.

One cannot leave this particular period of the Swami's preaching in India without mentioning those ideas which he circulated through the Punjab and in Kashmir and Rajputana at this time, and which were heralded throughout the Indian continent by the newspapers and periodicals. These ideas were in brief as follows :—

(1) To do away with the numerous sub-divisions of caste by inter-marriage among these sub-divisions.

Koviloor Digital Library

(2) To put a stop to excessive marriage. "Every beggar is anxious to marry", he said, "and produce ten more slaves in the country. Let a large number become celibates."

(3) To bridge over the gulf between the classes and the masses, to spread mass education, and to ameliorate the condition of the masses by giving them "Bread before metaphysics."

(4) To spread Sanskritic learning on intelligent lines. In this connection he warned Indians not to look with contempt at the Pandits and Brahmans, because it was they who had preserved their culture, for without them Sanskrit learning would have been nowhere in India.

(5) To have Universities of our own based an a constructive system which might produce strong men and deep thinkers. We should have man-making Universities where students and teachers should live together with higher ideals of life before them.

(6) To raise the individual character so as to inspire private and public confidence.

(7) To cultivate love and unity amongst all in spite of differences of opinion.

(8) To train numbers of young men and to send them out for preaching Hindu philosophy and religion in the West, and also for learning, in their turn, the practical sciences from the West.

The Swami had now finished his series of famous lectures in India, in which he had laid down his plans and ideas of bringing about a rehabilitation of the Dharma. These ideas scattered broadcast took deep root wheresoever he preached, and in all who read them. Now other aspects of his mission engaged him,—notably the training of his own disciples. He had still to train his monastic followers and to mould their characters and ideals, so as to enable them to carry into practice his plans and ideas of helping humanity in various ways in both India and abroad.

Koviloor Digital Library

CV.

LIFE IN THE MATH AND THE METROPOLIS.

The next period of the Swami's life in India, from January to October 1898, comprises the days he spent in Calcutta, and at the Math,—which was transferred in February from Alumbazar to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house on the western bank of the Ganges in the village of Belur,—and especially a long tour which he made in the Himalayas, in Darjeeling, Naini Tal, Almora and Kashmir. These days were days of travelling and training, the latter activity being particularly in connection with the European disciples and admirers who had come to India.

It was about the middle of January when the Swami returned from Khandwa in Indore. On the thirtieth of March he left Calcutta for Darjeeling, because of a great need of change. On May the third, he was once more in Calcutta. On May the eleventh, in company with a group, composed of his *gurubhâis*, and several of his Western and Indian disciples, he again left Calcutta, this time for Almora, where he remained until the tenth of June. On the twentieth of June he and his party of Western disciples are seen in Kashmir, where they remained until the middle of October. Again a return to the plains, the Swami accompanying his Western disciples as far as Lahore, whence he left for Calcutta, arriving there on the eighteenth of October. This general survey gives a keynote to the Swami's movements.

Of his stay in Calcutta, the story is one of continuous engagements and of training his disciples. The Math diary gives access to a study of his varied activities and occupations. Now it would be the house of some devotee which he would visit in Calcutta, then the entertaining of scores of visitors who came to see him at the monastery and at Balaram Babu's

Koviloor Digital Library

house. Now it would be hours of training of the Sannyâsins and the Brahmachârins of the Math, then hours of meditation, of song, of *Sankirtan*, of reading, of study, of writing theses, of answering letters, of reciting stories or anecdotes, or else relating the acquisition of certain stages of Yoga and of spiritual insight. Now it would be a lecture on the Bhagavad-Gita or on the Upanishads or other Scriptures of Hinduism, then a discourse on the material sciences or on the history of nations. Or it would be a question-class in which he would invite the members of the Math to raise or discuss their philosophical doubts, and would himself wind up the debate with his illuminating solutions of the problems at issue.

Among the many functions in which the Swami took part at this time, that of the consecration of the temple-room in the newly-built house of Babu Naba Gopal Ghosh, in Ramakrishnapore, was especially interesting. That householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna had invited the Swami with all the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math to perform the installation ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna's Image, and his joy knew no bounds when the Swami consented to his request. On the sixth of February, which happened to be the auspicious full-moon day, the Swami with all the Math Brothers arrived by three boats at the Ramakrishnapore Ghat, and started a *Sankirtan* procession in which numerous devotees joined as it wended its way through the streets, to the house of Naba Gopal Babu. Singing and dancing in the name of the Lord went on. The enthusiasm was maddening, the Swami himself being the central figure. He was barefooted and robed in simple *gerrua*. About his neck there hung a *Khōl*, with which he accompanied the song of "The Infant Ramakrishna", himself leading the chorus. Hundreds of people crowded the route of the procession to see the Swami, and when they found him dressed in the simple *gerrua* like other Sannyâsins, going barefooted through the streets, singing and playing upon the drum, they could not at first believe that it was the same world-conquering hero who had unfurled the banners

Koviloor Digital Library

of Vedanta in the West. They acclaimed him vociferously, and were heard saying to one another, "What humility! What beauty and loveliness of form!"

Arrived at the host's residence, the Swami and the party were received with supreme reverence, and conch-shells were blown and gongs beaten. After a while he was led to the worship-room, which was marble-floored, and beautifully fitted, with a throne on which was the porcelain picture of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji was delighted to see the room and also the elaborate collection of the materials for worship. The lady of the house being congratulated by him said with great humility, that she and her family were too poor and unworthy to rightly serve the Lord, and asked the Swami to bless them. Swamiji replied: "Dear mother, our Lord never in his life lived in such a marble-floored room. Born in a rustic, thatched hut, he spent his days in the simplest way. And," he added in his merry way, "if he does not live here, with all these services of devoted hearts, I do not know where else he should!"

Then the Swami having covered himself with ashes, sat on the worshipper's seat and invoked the Presence of Sri Ramakrishna, while his disciple, the Swami Prakashananda, recited appropriate *mantrams* of installation. It was here in this house that the Swami inaugurated the special Salutation to Sri Ramakrishna. Sitting before the Image in adoring meditation when the ceremony was over, he composed extempore the following Sloka and exclaimed:

स्थापकाय च धर्म्मस्य सर्वधर्म्मस्वरूपिणे।
अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः॥

"Salutation to Thee, O Ramakrishna, Thou, the Reinstator of Religion, Thou, the Embodiment of all Religions, Thou, the Greatest of all Incarnations!"

Day after day, experience after experience would occur at the monastery. Day after day, the members of the Order were trained by the Master, until his ideas became their very own. Through the perspective of his personality they saw the

Koviloor Digital Library

whole sphere of religious life in a new light and interpreted monastic ideals in startlingly new forms. Under his inspiration came upon some the desire to practise intense Sâdhanâ and austerities, upon others the desire to serve the sick and the poor, upon still others the desire of spreading ideas among the great masses, and all were saturated with his great spirit and patriotism. He was verily a living fire of thought and soul at this time. Now the whole day would be spent in an effort to realise the ideal of manliness in relation to the ideals of the Gita; then again it would be an emotional tempest that would fall upon all those who surrounded him and they would be carried, through the Swami's devotional interpretation, into new and higher flights of understanding regarding the ideas embodied in Shaivaism and Vaishnavism. Or still again, the whole time would be spent in purely intellectual discourses with reference to Vedanta, while the day following might see the Swami himself and those who heard him mounted on the highest heights of the Supreme Advaita Consciousness. And in the foreground at all times was the ideal of the Master. Aye, in Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house the days of old in Baranagore were oftentimes lived over again. The same old fire was present; the same intellectual brilliance shone forth; the same spiritual fervour was always uppermost.

It must be mentioned here that in the early part of the present year, 1898, the Swami purchased a large tract of land on the bank of the Ganges at Belur, about fifteen acres in extent, together with a building, almost opposite the Baranagore bathing-*ghat*, with gifts of many thousands of Rupees, most of which was given to him through the great generosity of his devoted friend and admirer, Miss Henrietta F. Muller. The purchasing of this particular site was somewhat in the nature of the fulfilment of a prophecy, for long before his going to the West he had said to some of his *gurubhais*, whilst standing on the Baranagore *ghat* and while yet no thought had been given to a possible site for the monastery, "Something tells me that our per-

Koviloor Digital Library

manent Math will be in this neighbourhood across the river." Yet, though the place had been purchased at the beginning of 1898, it was not occupied by the monks as the permanent head-quarters of the Order until the month of January of the year, 1899. The grounds having been used as a dockyard for country-boats were very hollow and uneven, and had to be filled up and levelled; besides, many repairs had to be done to the building and a second story raised over it, and one new building, a temple to Sri Ramakrishna, had to be constructed. For all of these except the last, the Swami had sufficient funds which he had brought with him from London, having been given to him by several of his disciples there. From every viewpoint the monastery purchase was a success. The fact of its being on the other side of the river, and four miles from the metropolis by the Howrah public road across the Howrah bridge, made it more secluded.

Somewhat later the Swami received a large sum of money from Mrs. Ole Bull, wherewith to endow the monastery itself, and to build the Temple of Sri Ramakrishna. Thus in all, the monastery when completed, together with its endowment trust, represented more than one hundred thousand Rupees. The Swami felt that he had now established the Order on a sound financial basis and was greatly relieved in mind.

The Math at the Nilambar Mukherjee's Garden-house was full by the time of the Shivarâtri festival, which precedes the Janmatithi of Sri Ramakrishna by three days. The Swami Saradananda had recently returned from America; the Swami Shivananda had come back from Ceylon after doing Vedanta work there, as also the Swami Trigunatita from Dinajpur after finishing the famine relief work. Swamiji was highly pleased with the respective works done by each of them. He also congratulated the Swami Brahmananda on the successful work the Ramakrishna Mission had done under his guidance, and the Swami Turiyananda for having, in his absence, trained the young Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math. At the instruction of Swamiji, the

Koviloor Digital Library

latter prepared, in the afternoon of the Shivarâtri day, thanksgiving addresses in English to each of the Swamis, and these were read to them in a meeting of the Brotherhood held at the Math for the purpose, under the presidentship of Swamiji. On being called upon by Swamiji, his *gurubhais* in their turn replied to the addresses in suitable words. Of the Swami Turiyananda he remarked, "He has the oratorical voice." Before rising to speak, the Swami said : "It is very difficult to address a parlour meeting. Before a large gathering it is easy to forget oneself in the subject of the discourse, and hence one is able to carry the audience with him. But this is not possible when a few men are present. However, let me try." Saying this he spoke for nearly half-an-hour with such a stirring eloquence that it seemed as if he was addressing a huge assemblage. In this lecture he gave sound counsel to his *gurubhais* and disciples in regard to the line of action they should adopt, both from an individual and communal aspect.

The *Janmatithi* or Birthday ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna, immediately preceding the public festival, which fell in March, was one of the happiest and took place at the monastery under the supervision of the Swami himself. On this occasion the Swami manifested his moral courage in a striking way. He had ordered a lot of sacred threads to be brought to the monastery. On the day itself, as one after another of the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna or of himself came, he let it be known that those of them who were not Brâhmanas, but who really belonged to the other two twice-born castes, were on that day to be invested with the sacred thread. Speaking to his Brâhmana disciple, Sarat Chandra, whom he commissioned to perform the ceremony, he said : "The children of our Lord are indeed Brâhmanas. Besides, the Vedas themselves say that every one of the twice-born castes has the right of having *upanayana*, or investiture with the sacred thread. They have no doubt become *vrâtyas*, that is, they have fallen from their own ritualistic rights, but by performing the ceremony of expiation they

Koviloor Digital Library

are re-entitled to their own original caste rights. This is the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Everyone will be purified by taking his name. Therefore this is the best occasion to give the *bhaktas* the sacred thread. Give all those who come the appropriate *Gâyatri mantram* according as they are Kshattriyas or Vaishyas. All these must be gradually raised to the status of the Brâhmana. All Hindus are brothers. It is we Hindus who have degraded them by repeatedly saying for centuries, 'We won't touch you!' 'We won't touch you!' No wonder that the whole country is brought down to the verge of humiliation, cowardice and stupidity. Now they have to be raised by preaching to them the Gospel of Hope and Cheer. Preach to them, 'You too are men like ourselves; you too have the same rights that we have!'"

As a result of the Swami's decision more than fifty *bhaktas* on that day received the *Gâyatri mantram* and the sacred thread, having first bathed themselves in the Ganges and then bowed before the Image of Sri Ramakrishna. Of course this procedure was opposed to everything in modern orthodoxy, but the Swami was determined to boldly impress his ideas upon the public by practical means. The initiates were naturally much ridiculed by their neighbours for having raised themselves to the status of Brâhmanas. Be that as it may, though the Swami did not preach in public in favour of giving the sacred thread to the so called Sudras, he was glad to watch that the movement to Brâhmanise all the castes who claimed to be twice-born, which had been in existence from sometime ago, spread rapidly in Bengal in subsequent years. And nowadays a large demand is made for the Brâhmanical thread by those who have so long been regarded as Sudras.

Though the Swami was bold to conceive the idea of attacking one of the strongholds of modern orthodoxy by taking the step narrated above, he was not an advocate of drastic reforms of a destructive nature. He was always in favour of reforms which were constructive throughout, which were a growth from within, and which were in conformity

Koviloor Digital Library

with the Shâstras. In this he followed the Rishis of old, penetrated into the true spirit and meaning of the Shâstras, and interpreted them by adapting to the need of the times, however radical they might seem, for the good of the race and its religion. The Swami would even have the time-honoured religious institutions and ceremonies strictly observed by the Order. Thus on the occasion of the *Shivaratri* festival, he was pained to see at the time of dinner that no one at the Math had fasted, as is the custom among devout Hindus to do. Seeing Swami Suddhananda come in, a little later, to have his meal, Swamiji asked him if fasting suited with him. On the latter's replying in the affirmative he enjoined him to observe the *Shivaratri vratam.* But knowing that the disciple was rather of a weakly constitution, he gave him permission to have fruits.

Following upon the *upanayana* ceremony mentioned above, the Sannyâsins of the monastery, joining mirth with devotion, secured the person of the Master and arrayed him as Shiva. They put the shell-ear-rings in his ears, covered his whole body with snowwhite holy ashes, and on his head they placed a mass of matted hair which reached down to his knee. Then they gave him bracelets of *rudrâksha* beads, and on his neck they hung a long rosary of huge *rudrâkshas* in three rows, and in his left hand they placed the sacred trident. Then they themselves smeared their own bodies with ashes, being helped by Swamiji. "The unspeakable beauty of that form of Swamiji dressed as Shiva", writes the author of 'Dialogues,' "cannot be described ; it is something which has to be seen and realised. Each and all present declared afterwards that they felt as if Shiva Himself was before them in His youthful ascetic form. And Swamiji with the Sannyâsins seated round him like so many Bhairavas, or attendants of the Great God, seemed to have brought into living presence the majesty of Kailasa within the precincts of the Math." The Swami himself sang sweetly a hymn to Sri Rama, and inebriated with the name of the Lord went on repeating again and

Koviloor Digital Library

again "Rama, Rama, Sri Rama, Rama !" He appeared entranced in Shiva nature. The sublimity of his expression deepened a hundredfold ! His eyes were half-shut ; he was seated in Padmâsana, while his hand played on the *tânpurâ*. The whole gathering of monks and devotees were now caught up in the supreme spirit of the hour and thrilled with religious ecstasy. They too seemed intoxicated with draughts of nectar of the name of Rama issuing from the lips of the Master. For more than half-an-hour the tensest stillness prevailed. All sat motionless, as if painted on a canvas. It was, indeed, a sight for the gods !

The chanting ended, the Swami sang a song in the same state of God-intoxication. Then the Swami Saradananda followed with the song, "The Hymn of Creation," composed by Swamiji. His melodious voice filled the hall with the accompaniment of the sweet and solemn sound of the *pâkhwâj* played by Swamiji. After some favourite songs of Sri Ramakrishna had been sung, the Swami suddenly disrobed himself of his decorations, dressed up Girish Babu in them and smeared his body with ashes. He then had a *gerrua* cloth put on him, with the remark, "Paramahamsa Deva used to say that G. C. is born of the part of Bhairava ! Aye, there is no difference between him and ourselves." This moved the great dramatist and brought tears into his eyes. When asked by Swamiji to speak of Sri Ramakrishna to the assembled *bhaktas*, he could only say, after a long silence, with his voice choked with emotion : "What shall I speak of our all-merciful Lord ! His infinite grace I feel in that He has given even an unworthy self like me the privilege of sitting on the same seat with such pure souls like you who have renounced *kâmini kânchana*, 'Lust and Gold', even from boyhood !"

After the tiffin hour, the Swami briefly addressed those who had received the sacred thread, telling them to repeat the *Gâyatri* daily at least one hundred times. In the meantime the Swami Akhandananda arrived at the Math from his orphanage in Murshidabad, bringing with him two sweet-

Koviloor Digital Library

meats called *chhanabarhas*, which were unusually big and heavy. Mentioning his *gurubhâi* Swamiji said, "Look ! What a great Karmayogin he is ! Without fear, caring neither for life nor death, how he is working with one-pointed devotion for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many !" This led Swamiji to hold a long discourse on Karmayoga, in which he eloquently pointed out how the realisation of the Self could be reached by devotedly working for others without attachment, seeing the Self in all. Then the Swami sang a beautiful song, composed by Girish Babu, "The Infant Ramakrishna" in which, among others, are the lines :—

"On the lap of the poor Brâhmana's spouse
Who art Thou, O Radiant One, lying ?
Who art Thou, O Digambara (Naked One), come to
the humble cottage-room ?

* * * *

Grieved at the world's sore afflictions
Hast Thou come with Thy heart bleeding for it ?

* * * *

After this the songs in which occur the lines, "My mind, a black-bee, has become enrapt in the blue-lotus Feet of Kali...", and "Thou Who carriest on Thyself the burden of innumerable worlds.....," were sung.

Among the many visits that the Swami had from distinguished persons while living in the monastery at this time, the one from the Buddhist missionary, the Anagarika Dharmapala, is worthy of note. He had come to see Mrs. Ole Bull, who was then residing at the old cottage on the recently purchased Math grounds, and had stopped first at the monastery in order to have the Swami accompany him. The weather was exceedingly inclement. The rain was pouring in torrents. Nevertheless, after they had waited an hour, the Swami and Mr. Dharmapala and others decided to start. The path lay across very uneven and muddy ground, particularly in the compound of the new Math which was being levelled with earth. Slipping his foot here and there, drenched with

Koviloor Digital Library

rain by occasional squalls, the Swami enjoyed himself like a boy at play, shrieking with laughter and merriment. Though he and others walked barefooted, Mr. Dharmapala did not do likewise, though advised by Swamiji. Being rather lame, at one place his foot sank so deeply in the mud that he could not extricate himself. The Swami seeing the plight of his friend at once lent his shoulder for his support and putting his arm round his waist helped him out, and both laughing walked together in the same fashion the rest of the way.

Somehow arriving at their destination, all went to wash their feet, and when Swamiji saw Mr. Dharmapala taking up a pitcher of water for doing so, he at once snatched it from his hand, saying, "You are my guest, and I must have the privilege of serving you !" With these words he was on the point of washing his feet when there was a storm of protest, both on the part of Mr. Dharmapala and especially of his own disciples. One literally tore him away from his intended task, crying out, "Please let me do it, Mahârâj ! How can *you* think of doing this ! It is not proper for you to do such an act of service letting your disciples look on." In India especially, to wash another's feet is considered an act of humblest service. All those, therefore, who witnessed the scene were amazed at the Swami's sincere humility and charming manners.

Another event of these days was the initiation of the Swamis Swarupananda and Sureswarananda into Sannyâs on the twenty-ninth of March. It was on his third or fourth visit to the Math that the former was so deeply impressed with the long conversation he had with the Swami, that then and there he decided to give up the world and lead the life of practical spirituality under the Swami's guidance. The friends who had accompanied him were startled when they were asked by him to carry the news to his home that he did not mean to return thither any more, a vow which he rigorously fulfilled in his life. For several years past he had been seriously thinking on the problems of Life and Death and Misery, and how he could break the dream and be of service to the world.

Koviloor Digital Library

Though he had been married in his youth he had eschewed all marital relations. Living under his parental roof a life of strict Brahmacharya, he was consumed with a burning thirst for doing something to help his brother-men. On meeting the Swami it took him no time to see, as he said in later years, that the opportunities of fructifying his own ideas, which coincided with those of the Swami, would be best afforded by his joining the Order, and he expressed as much to the Master. When Swamiji heard of this he was joyful at heart and said to a *gurubhâi* : "We have made an *acquisition* to-day !" Much later he said to a friend : "To get an efficient worker like Swarupananda is of greater gain than receiving thousands of gold coins." This highly-qualified disciple, contrary to the general rule of the Order, was initiated after but a few days' stay at the monastery, so great was his Master's faith in him. Within a few months he was made the editor of the "Prabuddha Bharata" magazine, and when the Advaita Ashrama was founded by the Swami in the Himalayas in the early part of the next year, he was made its President, thus substantiating his Guru's great confidence in him. The Sister Nivedita acknowledges her debt to him in her book, "The Master as I Saw Him," in these words :—

"..... It was my great good fortune that I was given at this time (March—April, 1898) as my daily teacher, in Bengalee and in Hindu religious literature, the young monk known as the Swami Swarupananda. For I have always thought that it was to this fact that I found myself on the line of communication between his mind and that of our Master,—as on the pathway of interaction between some major and minor heliograph,—that I owed my ability thereafter to read and understand a little of those feelings and ideas with which the air about us was charged.

"* * * And I, reading the Bhagavad-Gita under his guidance, long afterwards at Almora, was made able to conceive of what we call the love of God as a burning thirst.

"Under the influence of the Swami Swarupananda I began seriously the attempt at meditation. And if it had not been for this help of his, one of the greatest hours of my life would have passed me by."

Four days previous to the Swami Swarupananda's initiation Miss Margaret Noble took the vows of Brahmacharya, on Friday which happened to be the Christian Feast

Koviloor Digital Library

of the Annunciation, at the hands of her Master. She was given most appropriately the name of Nivedita, by which she became widely known both in India and abroad, the name itself meaning, "One who is dedicated". As illustrating a vital point in the Swami's character, and the ideal he put before those whom he made his own, the Sister herself gives to her readers a peep into the nature of the dedication ceremony in these words :—

"May one of them never forget a certain day of consecration, in the chapel at the monastery, when, as the opening step in a lifetime, so to speak, he first taught her to perform the worship of Shiva, and then made the whole culminate in an offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha! 'Go thou,' he said, as if addressing in one person each separate soul that would ever come to him for guidance, 'and follow Him who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES, before He attained the vision of the Buddha!'"

This ceremony was in many respects a momentous event, as the Sister was the first Western woman novice received into any monastic order in India. After the service she and two American lady-disciples were taken upstairs, and the Swami put on the ashes and bone-ear-rings and matted locks of a Shiva-Yogi, and sang and played to them for an hour. An equally interesting event, however, and equally significant of the increasing contact, under the master guidance of the Swami, between the West and the East, was the receiving of the European lady-disciples in audience by the Holy Mother, the spouse of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and an orthodox lady of the highest rank. The audience was touching. She spoke of her visitors as "My children." Thence they brought back with them to their cottage for a few hours an aged lady, Gopâler Mâ, whom Sri Ramakrishna used to call 'mother' in a special sense, and won her, the most orthodox of Brâhmana widows, even to eat with them, and a week later to live with them for three days.

With the exception of his attendance at a meeting of the Science Association in Bowbazar on the twenty-first of March, and his presiding at a meeting in the Emerald Theatre on the

Koviloor Digital Library

eighteenth, when the Swami Saradananda spoke on "Our Mission in America", Swamiji did not appear before the Calcutta public save on the eleventh of March when he presided at a meeting in the Star Theatre at which the Sister Nivedita lectured on "The influence of Indian Spiritual Thought in England", and he himself spoke briefly on the same subject. In introducing the lecturer he spoke of her as "another gift of England to India," the others being Mrs. Besant and Miss Muller, all of whom, he said, had consecrated their lives to work for the good of India. In the course of her beautiful address, the Sister Nivedita said :—

".....You have the ingenuity of six thousand years of conservatism. But yours is the conservatism of a people who have through that long period been able to preserve the greatest spiritual treasures for the world, and it is for this reason that I have come to India to serve her with our burning passion for service....."

When she had finished, the Swami called upon Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Henrietta Muller to say a few words. The former stated that the literature of India had become a living one to Western minds, and that especially the works of Swami Vivekananda had become household books of the Americans. Miss Muller was hailed with applause when she addressed the audience as, "My dear friends and fellow-countrymen," for she said that she and the other Western disciples of the Swami felt in coming to India that they had come to their home—home not only of spiritual enlightenment and religious wisdom, but the dwelling-place of their own kindred. Continuing she said in part as follows :—

"....The time has now come when we of the West are made rich and happy by hearing and reading these truths of India's spirituality voiced forth in a living voice, and they are presented to us in a form which makes them not only acceptable and practicable, but they have already given a new life and spirit to the dead bones of the Western nations. Swami Vivekananda has told you little about the work that he has done in the West ; he himself can measure in a very small degree how great is the reformation, how tremendous is the change and modification which he has instituted in public and social life in the West. And he has also carried that great change of ideas, that great change of

Koviloor Digital Library

spiritual and religious outlook right into the very homes and hearts of those people who have been fortunate enough to hear him. It is not only that we have heard his voice, it is not only that we have learned those noble doctrines which till now were unknown to us, it is also that we have received them into our hearts, we have carried them into our homes, to our fathers, mothers, daughters and children who are all trying to put the great spiritual wisdom of India into practice,—the wisdom that has been yours since time immemorial."

The Swami's remarks were stirring and luminous. He pointed out the fact that the spiritual ideas of the Indian people travelled towards both the East and the West in days gone by. He urged on the need of India becoming, as she was of old, the spiritual teacher of the world. He said that the West, owing its inheritance to the Greeks, emphasised expression. Expansion and expression were purely Western ideas, the very backbone of Western civilisation ; and that if India was to rise, it should, like the West, seek an outlet for the expression of its thoughts and culture. In expressing itself, it would expand. He spoke of the Anglo-Saxon race in glowing terms, saying that it had performed wonders in the progress of humanity, and that from it the Indians had to learn industries and sciences. This kind of interaction would make the Indians strong and powerful as a nation. He particularly laid stress on his countrymen having *Sraddhâ*. "Oh man," he declared, "have faith in yourself, and that is the way by which you can have faith in God.....To preach the doctrine of *Sraddhâ*, or omnipotent faith, is the mission of my life... .....Infinite faith begets infinite aspiration. If that faith comes to us, it will bring back our national life to the days of Vyâsa and Arjuna—the days when all our sublime doctrines of humanity were preached." He concluded with a stirring call to the young men of Bengal to rouse themselves, poor though they be—for, "the poor did all the great and gigantic work of the world"—to work out the salvation of India, fortified with purity, sincerity, steadiness and renunciation, but above all, with infinite faith in the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Koviloor Digital Library

On March the thirtieth, the Swami left Calcutta for another sojourn in Darjeeling, as the guest of the family with whom he had lived before. Here he once more allowed himself the fullest freedom, enjoying his rest in every possible way. In so far as he could, he followed the instructions of his physicians not even to think on any serious subject. When he was only partially restored in health, news suddenly reached him of the outbreak of plague in Calcutta. He could not think of taking rest for himself any more, and immediately hastened down to the metropolis so that he may be of help to his people who were terror-stricken with the new plague regulations. The outlook in Calcutta was threatening. It seemed as if a storm were about to burst. The people were running away in panic. The soldiery were called to quell riots. The Swami grasped the gravity of the situation at once. On May 3rd, the very day of his arrival at the Math, he is seen drafting and in writing a plague manifesto in Bengali and in Hindi. He was greatly concerned and wanted to start relief operations immediately to help the afflicted. When a *gurubhâi* asked him, "Swamiji, where will the funds come from ?" He replied with sudden fierceness of decision, "Why ? We shall sell the newly-bought Math grounds, if necessary ! We are Sannyâsins, we must be ready to sleep under the trees and live on daily *bhikshâ* as we did before. What should we care for Math and possessions when by the disposing of them we could relieve thousands suffering before our eyes !" Aye, he was ready to dispose of the monastery itself for the good of the people ! Fortunately, however, this extreme step was not necessitated, for he soon received promises of ample funds for his immediate work. It was settled that an extensive plot of ground should be rented at once, and in compliance with the Government plague regulations, segregation camps should be put up, in which plague patients would be accommodated and nursed in such a way that the Hindu community would have no objection. Workers also came in numbers to co-operate with his own personal disciples. The Swami instructed them to teach sanitation and

Koviloor Digital Library

themselves clean the lanes and the houses of the districts into which they were sent. The relief which this work rendered to the plague patients was enormous, and the measures adopted by the Swami gave the people confidence. This work endeared him to the public, as they saw that he, indeed, was a practical Vedantin, a teacher who brought to bear the highest metaphysical doctrines of the Vedanta in the tangible form of relieving the wants and afflictions of his fellowmen.

The Swami remained in Calcutta until the possibility of an epidemic had passed away, and the stringent plague regulations withdrawn to the great relief of the citizens. Already plans were being formed to make a journey to the Himalayas with his Western disciples. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who had taken up their residence in Almora, after a personal tour of India, in turn following upon a long stay at Simla, were also welcoming the Swami by letters. Accordingly, on the night of May the eleventh, a large party left the Howrah station for Kathgodam, whence the journey was to be made to Almora *via* Naini Tal. In the party were the Swamis Turiyananda, Niranjanananda, Sadananda and Swarupananda, and Mrs. Bull, Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, the Sister Nivedita and Miss Josephine MacLeod. It was Mrs. Patterson who had befriended the Swami once, during the early days of his preaching in America, by taking him into her home when she heard with indignation that he was refused admittance in the hotels of the city owing to his colour. Since then she became a great friend and admirer of the Swami, and when she came to know of the proposed journey she at once joined the party without caring for the whispered criticism and the probable outcasting by the higher official world of Calcutta.

The Swami worked until the last moment. Only the night before, he had held a long "question-and-answer class" at which all the inmates of the monastery attended. The journey now undertaken was again due to his constantly increasing ill-health.

Koviloor Digital Library

CVI.

THE TRAINING OF THE WESTERN DISCIPLES.

It was in the early part of March when Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod, who had come from America on February the eighth, took up their residence in the old house on the Belur Math grounds. They had come all the way from America in order to see for themselves the land of their Master's birth, and to come into closer contact with him and his people for a further study of his teaching. Miss Margaret Noble also had broken off all associations of her English life and had come to India, on January the twenty-eighth at the call of the Swami, intending to found, in connection with Miss Henrietta Muller's offer, an institution for the education of Indian Womanhood. It was with great pleasure that the Swami had received them, and one sees him henceforth making constant effort to bring about a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Hindu culture in the minds of his Western followers, and in this connection he commenced on a definite scale the training of his Western disciples. This training, however, was not in the long run confined to his Western disciples only, for, through the facile pen of the celebrated Sister Nivedita, the ideas they received were transmitted to a numerous audience of both Western and Eastern readers. Through her writings the more learned and scholarly aspects of the Swami's message to India as a whole were likewise heralded broadcast. Thus, while the Swami was educating the small group of his Western disciples he was at one and the same time speaking to an immense audience. And it has been, in some sense in particular, that the ideas which he communicated in these days to his European followers have given tremendous impetus, through the Sister Nivedita, in the development of a national consciousness.

Koviloor Digital Library

While at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house, the Swami was wont to frequent the river-side cottage of his European disciples, even spending hours daily with them. Whenever he came, for them the house became a sanctuary, his visits regarded as a privilege and a blessing, and the hours he spent with them made life all the richer and sweeter and, above all, holier. Here under the trees he would reveal to them in an inexhaustible flow of conversation the deepest secrets of the Indian world, pertaining to its history, its folk-lore, its caste, custom and race. The ideals and realities of Indian religions were interpreted to them in such vivid, poetic and dramatic colours that, "In fact India herself became, as heard in him, as the last and noblest of the Puranas, uttering itself through his lips," though it was true at the same time that whatever the subject of his conversation, "it ended always on the note of the Infinite."

His method of teaching was in itself unique. It consisted in unrelated representations of the Indian experience, the task of relation being left to the imagination and effort of his hearers. It was as a tremendous stimulus to which they themselves must respond. With snatches of poetry or with glimpses from the Puranas he would give them vivid images of the mythology and ritualism of Hinduism. To-day it might be Uma and Shiva, to-morrow Kali, then another day Radha or Krishna. Or guided by the mood of the moment he would take up any subject, literary, scientific or ethnological,—for to him nothing was secular,—and he would always bring his realisation of the Advaita philosophy to bear on the interpretation of the world in such a convincing way as to make them feel it as "an illustration of the Ultimate Vision."

The Swami is seen in these days as the Master unburdening himself of his ideas and message, particularly relating to India, to a select group of disciples. While he had no mercy with his Western disciples in their arrogance born of wrong notions and prepossessions with regard to India, he was at the same time unsparing in his criticism of the anomalies and inconsistencies of castes and customs which

Koviloor Digital Library

were crushing the very life out of Hindu society. He had a loathing for bondage in any shape and a horror of those who "cover chains with flowers." Like another Buddha he would universalise the scope of the Dharma. He would soften nothing in Hinduism which might at first sight be difficult or repellent to the European mind ; he would rather put before them such things in their extreme form, and compel them to enter into their spirit and apprehend their meaning. The most difficult task for the Western disciples was, naturally, the understanding of the Hindu religious ideals and forms of worship, and the Hindu outlook on life. And the Swami would talk for hours, straining his mind and putting his whole heart in his effort to elucidate them. Carried by his burning enthusiasm the Western disciples caught glimpses of the background of the Hindu thought-symbols, then so strange to them, and learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving, till they became their very own. Truly, in the Swami, East and West were made one. And in the end his Eastern and Western disciples mixed freely in a sweet intimacy of thought and life. But the distance to be travelled was indeed enormous. The process required a tremendous shifting of personality ; and for the European disciples to acquire consciously the culture to which the Indian disciples were related instinctively by birth, necessitated a complete self-orientation,—and the presence of a Master-Mind. And the Swami was infinitely patient. He was never found to show the slightest irritation at interruptions in the flow of his conversation, however frequent and irrelevant they might be, as he knew perfectly well their difficulties.

The training of his Western disciples who came to India was of momentous concern to the Swami Vivekananda as a spiritual teacher and as a great Hindu. He knew that a grave responsibility now rested upon him. He knew that for them, coming into close contact with the Indian people at their homes, seeing their manners and habits of dress and food and thought, and realising the material disadvantages

Koviloor Digital Library

of the land and its limitations, would be a crucial test of their faith and regard for the Vedanta and of their power to further fathom the Hinduism he had preached. But he did not know perhaps that the strangest revelation to them was he himself. In the West he had rarely spoken in detail about the former things. There he was a religious messenger, an apostle of Hinduism, his sole mission being to voice forth the spiritual message, the eternal wisdom of the far past, and his only longing being the salvation of man from ignorance and the promotion of a true brotherly feeling and toleration for the faiths and beliefs of nations other than one's own. In India he was more of a patriot, a worker for the regeneration of his motherland, with all the vain struggle and torture of a lion caught in a net. Baffled and thwarted, though not by the numerous formidable obstacles that lay in his path of fructifying his great purpose—for he had accounted for them from before—but by the growing consciousness of failing health, even at the moment when his power had reached its height, his heart was prone to despair. But not to be dismayed and ruffled by such distracting circumstances, like a great hero that he was, he made again and again superhuman efforts to rise to the occasion. Forced to live in the monastery a comparatively retired life, he put his whole soul to the making of workers to carry out his plans and ideas. And among the Western disciples he particularly chose one on whom he had great hope and trust, and who had the genius of a brilliant intellectual worker, and as such his illuminating discourses were mainly directed to her. If he had done nothing during this period than the making of the Sister Nivedita, he could not be said to have spent the year in vain.

He regarded the coming to India of his Western disciples in the way of test and experiment. But had they all turned against him he would not have for one moment allowed himself to think unkindly of them. Had he not written to the Sister Nivedita on the eve of her departure from London, "I will stand by you unto death, whether

Koviloor Digital Library

you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man." Aye, to him his disciples were his disciples. There was neither Indian nor European there. And what father ever loved his children with a greater love than did he his disciples !

Since the arrival of Miss Noble in Calcutta, the idea of training her to be of service to her adopted land seriously exercised the Swami's mind. In his talks at the river-side cottage at Belur with the Western disciples he instilled into their minds the Indian consciousness, for he felt that a European who was to work on his behalf for India, must do so absolutely in the Indian way, strictly observing Hindu manners, customs and etiquette even to their smallest details. Such an one, he demanded, must adopt the food, clothes, language and general habits of the Hindus, and he held up before one of them who was to take charge of the education of Hindu women, the life of Brahmacharyam of the orthodox Brâhmana widow as her model, but enlarging the scope by substituting the loving service to the family of the former for the selfless service to the Indian people in the case of the latter. "You have to set yourself," he said to her, "to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brâhmana Brahmachârini's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory." Who can deny that such a line of *Sâdhanâ* was the only means of assimilating that new consciousness which would enable her to grasp in a true light Indian problems and perceptions of larger import ? The Swami would even insist that those feelings and prejudices that might appear crude, must be reverentially approached and studied, and not blindly ignored and despised. "We shall speak to all men," he said, "in terms of their own orthodoxy !" Of course there were many

Koviloor Digital Library

inconveniences to the Western disciples, often much difficulty, particularly in getting accustomed to Indian diet and Indian manners. Ridiculous and compromising blunders were often made, but the Swami would always adjust the difficulty and right the matter.

The Swami was defiant in the defence of the culture of his people. He was ready to beat down mercilessly any other than a living interest in everything connected with the people of his land and thundered against anything that sounded like patronising. He would turn upon the Western disciples if they were guilty of sophistical, stupid or ridiculous criticism. He demanded that they should come to the task of the understanding of India without pre-possessions and with sincerity, and that India must be understood in the light of the spiritual vision. He upset any notion they might have had as to his country being either old or effete, and he often said that only a youthful nation could so readily have assimilated the ideals of a foreign culture. The proficiency with which the Indians had mastered the English language, the readiness with which they had fitted themselves for the various tasks which had presented themselves in the Modern Transition, and the adaptability of the many present-day movements to the accepted canons of the West, prove the vigour and the efficiency of the race as also its possibilities. He made them see India, in the light of its ideals and ideas, as young, vital and powerful, as one throughout in the religious vision. He made them see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it attained to the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed of an unshakable stability and strength all its own. He made them see the *why* of every Indian custom. And they saw that though India was poor, it was clean, and that poverty was honoured in the land where religion was understood to be renunciation, and that here poverty was not necessarily associated with vice, as it is so often in the West. The daily

Koviloor Digital Library

bath, the constant cleansing of the house and household utensils, because of the religious idea, they saw, made cleanliness in India godliness itself. And then the Indian life, as seen through his eyes, revealed to them series after series of cinematographic representations of greatness, of loveliness, and of sweet simplicity. The women with their shining brass *lotâs* returning from the Ganges, the sight of hundreds standing in the waters with hands folded to the brow in salutation to the rising or the arisen sun, the street-singers, and the sight of a wandering monk covered with ashes, passing through the streets, were untiringly interesting and ceaselessly novel. And in all of this the Swami stood in the minds of his Western disciples in his true background, as the very explanation of the glorious spirit of the land. To the Swami all India was sacred and wonderful. And later on as he wandered with his disciples from city to city and province to province, he would recount to them the glories and the beauties of the land. The Swami was anxious that his Western disciples should make an impartial study of Indian problems. They were not only to see the glories, but also to have especially a clear understanding of the problems of the land and bring the ideals and methods of Western scientific culture to bear upon the task of finding a solution.

Certainly the training of his Western disciples was an arduous task, and he was often compelled to put them through a severe intellectual and personal training. To understand India was not the task of a day but of years. He would invite them to the study of the philosophical background of Indian thought and would train them, for example, to perceive the purposes and functions of Indian art, calling them to the task of fathoming the *spiritual meaning* of even the crudest images and idols. He pictured to them, likewise, the historic influence of Hinduism upon the world, showing the close similarity between its forms and those of Roman Catholicism. Often he would make contrast with the East and the West, showing alternately the advantages and disadvantages of the varied civilisation of the world. In short,

Koviloor Digital Library

he gave them the *spirit* of India and initiated them into its worth and its values.

In order to bind his Western and Eastern disciples together, the Swami would often deliberately perform some act, strikingly unorthodox, before a large number of his people, such as, showing social preference to his Western disciples, by calling them true Brâhmanas and Kshattriyas, eating or drinking after them, or eating in public the food which they had cooked for him, and even make his brother-monks do the same. He thus broke down their shyness and repugnance which was at first almost insurmountable. Thus to oppose long-standing traditions showed the supreme indifference to criticism and the tremendous sincerity of the Swami. His determination was to make all his disciples one in a real and deep brotherhood. In this the Swami truly united, as it were, the ends of the earth, and brought together the most opposite of human temperaments.

It goes without saying that in training his Western disciples in the way he did, the Swami took into consideration the tendencies and aspirations of the taught, for as a born educator he knew that to go against them was assuredly to court disastrous results. Moreover, in such matters as these, it was not his nature to interfere with the liberty of the disciples. He would leave them free to observe, to gain their own experience, even at the cost of making mistakes. Sometimes, though, he would impose upon them long periods of severe restraint. "Struggle to realise yourselves," he would say, "without a trace of emotion!" Or in talking of future methods he would say, "Mind! No loaves and fishes! No glamour of the world! All this must be cut short. It must be rooted out. It is sentimentality,—the overflow of the senses. It comes to you in colour, sight, sound, and associations. Cut it off. Learn to hate it. It is utter poison!"

Could they follow their Master's teachings out of the setting of their European dress, habits and environment? He made frequent tests and found them true to the culture they had adopted, thus proving his belief, "Birth is nothing,

Koviloor Digital Library

environment is everything." Aye, but that environment must be an atmosphere and an influence strong enough to burn into ashes, as it were, the forces of the past *samskâras* of the disciple, which only a *siddha guru*, an illumined teacher, is capable of bringing about.

The period of the training of the Western disciples of the Swami, which extended over nearly the whole of 1898, is filled with many humorous and solemn hours. The training which they received shaped their lives irrevocably, and made them apostles either in a personal or in a public manner, of the greatness of Hinduism and Hindusthan. Some have passed away; some still live. But all alike have instinctively followed out the passionate request which he made to one who had asked him, "Swamiji, how can I best help you?" His answer was "LOVE INDIA!"

To what extent the ideals set forth before the Western disciples by the Swami through his inspiring talks and personality translated themselves into living realities, is beautifully expressed by the Sister Nivedita herself in the following words which she wrote at the year's end:—

"Beautiful have been the days of this year. In them the Ideal has become the Real. First in our river-side cottage at Belur; then in the Himalayas, at Naini Tal and Almora; afterwards wandering here and there through Kashmir;—everywhere have come hours never to be forgotten, words that will echo through our lives for ever, and once at least, a glimpse of the Beatific Vision.

"It has been all play.

"We have seen a love that would be one with the humblest and most ignorant, seeing the world for the moment through his eyes, as if criticism were not; we have laughed over the colossal caprice of genius; we have warmed ourselves at heroic fires; and we have been present, as it were, at the awakening of the Holy Child.

"But there has been nothing grim or serious about any of these things. Pain has come close to all of us. Solemn anniversaries have been and gone. But sorrow was lifted into a golden light, where it was made radiant, and did not destroy.

"Fain, if I could, would I describe our journeys. Even as I write I see the Irises in bloom at Baramulla; the young rice beneath the poplars at Islamabad; starlight scenes in Himalayan forests; and

Koviloor Digital Library

the royal beauties of Delhi and the Taj. One longs to attempt some memorial of these. It would be worse than useless. Not, then, in words, but in the light of memory, they are enshrined for ever, together with the kindly and gentle folk who dwell among them, and whom we trust always to have left the gladder for our coming.

"We have learnt something of the mood in which new faiths are born, and of the Persons who inspire such faiths. For we have been with one who drew all men to him,—listening to all, feeling with all, and refusing none. We have known a humility that wiped out all littleness, a renunciation that would die for scorn of oppression and pity of the oppressed, a love that would bless even the oncoming feet of torture and of death. We have joined hands with that woman who washed the feet of the Lord with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. We have lacked, not the occasion, but her passionate unconsciousness of self.

"Seated under a tree in the garden of dead emperors there came to us a vision of all the rich and splendid things of Earth, offering themselves as a shrine for the great of soul. The storied windows of cathedrals, and the jewelled thrones of kings, the banners of great captains and the vestments of the priests, the pageants of cities, and the retreats of the proud,—all came, and all were rejected.

"In the garments of the beggar, despised by the alien, worshipped by the people, we have seen him; and only the bread of toil, the shelter of cottage-roofs, and the common road across the cornfields seem real enough for the background to this life.....Amongst his own, the ignorant loved him as much as scholars and statesmen. The boatmen watched the river, in his absence, for his return, and servants disputed with guests to do him service. And through it all, the veil of playfulness was never dropped. 'They played with the Lord', and instinctively they knew it.

"To those who have known such hours, life is richer and sweeter, and in the long nights even the wind in the palm-trees seems to cry—

"'Mahadeva! Mahadeva! Mahadeva!'"

Koviloor Digital Library

CVII.

THE MASTER AT NAINI TAL.

The journey from Calcutta to Naini Tal was throughout most interesting and educative to the Swami's companions. He filled the hours with spiritual and historic discussions, during which snatches of Persian poetry or some proverb from the Chinese, or some Sanskrit quotation would be appropriately made. All during the journey the Swami's historic consciousness and love of his country were intensely evident. With passionate enthusiasm he would introduce them one by one to each point of interest as they reached it. As the train passed on and on he related to them the greatness of Patna or Benares, or the splendours of the old Nawab courts of Lucknow, with such ardour and absorption as to carry on the minds of his listeners the impression that they were in the presence of one who lived and moved and had his very being in the sense of his country's past. Indeed, there was not one city on which he did not look with supreme tenderness and of whose history he was unaware. When traversing the Terai, he made them feel that this was like the very earth on which the Buddha had passed the days of his youth and renunciation in search for the highest truth. The gorgeous peacocks that now and then flew past, would lend occasion for some graphic account of the invincible Rajputs. An occasional elephant or a train of camels would bring on a recital of tales of ancient battles or trade, or of the pomp of ancient Rajahs or the Moghul court. And then, again, it might be the story of famines and malaria. The long stretches of the plains with their fields, farms and villages would give rise to thoughts concerning the communal system of agriculture, or the beauties of the daily life of the farm housewife, or the sweet hospitality of the poor and humble Indian peasant folk to the *Sâdhus*. And in the telling of these latter things his eyes would glisten and his

Koviloor Digital Library

voice would be thrilled as he was haunted by the memory of his own days as a wanderer on the face of the Indian continent, when his great pleasure had been to reach some village-compound and watch the home-coming of the cows at dusk. When speeding through the North-West Provinces he told them of the wisdom and the methods of the great and merciful English ruler who was at that time at the helm of their administration. "Unlike others," he said, "he understands the necessity of personal government in Oriental countries, where a strong public opinion is not yet developed; so no hospital, no college, no office knows the day, when he will pay it a visit of inspection. And even the poorest believe that if only he can reach him personally he will receive justice at his hands." He spoke of democracy as the worst form for an imperial government to take, and he was inclined to believe, he said, that the perception of this truth must have actuated Julius Cæsar to assume imperial authority. By relating the tragic personal histories of many simple folk who in the early years of British rule in India had spent their all in the vain hope of reaching the Queen, and gaining her ear, at Windsor, he made his companions realise, "How hard it had been for the Indian masses to understand the transition from the personal rule of sovereigns, always accessible to appeal, always open to the impulse of mercy, and able to exercise a supreme discretion, to the cold bureaucratic methods of a series of departments." The universality of his conversation with his European disciples gave entree to the universality of his learning and his patriotism. Now it would be Benares or Delhi which passed in vivid and successive pictures before his hearers. The piety of the Hindu on the banks of the Ganges and the piety of the Mussalman kneeling in his prayers, wherever the ordained hour might find him, were to his eyes equally great and uniquely Indian.

But the Swami's passionate description of his motherland to his European disciples was not permeated only with historic elements; it was highly physical and yet supremely spiritual as well. And in word-pictures he would paint his

Koviloor Digital Library

love for the broad rivers and spreading forests and mighty mountains, all of which were such vital elements in the race culture of his people. Even the dry-baked soil of the plains, the hot sands of the desert and the dry gravel-beds and stony tracts of many rivers had their message for him. His contact with his Western disciples, who in their zeal hung on every word that fell from his lips, seemed to draw from the Swami all his knowledge and love for India in a supreme poetic description. From history and scene his mind would travel to culture, and he might tell them how in India custom and religion are one. The burning-ghat where Shiva, the Lord of monks, reigns; the thought of a dead body as a thing impure, because cast off by the soul; the eating of food with the right hand and its use in worship and *japam*; the nun-like life of the Hindu widow and her *ekâdashi*, or fast, vigils and other rounds of austerities; the respect for parents as incarnate gods; the *Varnâshrama Dharma*; the appointed hours of religious service and meditation for the Brâhmana caste; the twofold national ideal of renunciation and realisation represented by the Sannyâsin; the temple which each Hindu house is; the idea of the *Ishtam*; the chanting of the Vedas by the children of the Brâhmanas in the temple courtyards in Benares and in the South; the Mohammedan kneeling in prayer wheresoever the time of prayer may find him; the ideas of equality and fraternity practised among the followers of the Prophet;—all these, the Swami would say, made up the culture of his land.

The disciples, hearing these graphic descriptions of the life and soul of his land, as they came in poetic or philosophical glimpses vouchsafed to them by the Master, understood now why he had repeated in his reply to the welcome address in Calcutta that which he had told to an English friend on leaving the West: "India I loved before I came away; now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the Place of Pilgrimage, the Tirtha!"

Koviloor Digital Library

On the morning of the Thirteenth of May the journey came to an end and the party reached Naini Tal, the Swami stopping there to see his disciple, the Maharajah of Khetri, then staying in these hills. With great pleasure the Swami introduced the Prince to his European disciples. It was here also that he met a Mohammedan gentleman, an Advaita Vedantist at heart, who, struck by his extraordinary spiritual powers and personality, exclaimed: "Swamiji, if in after-times any claim you as an Avatara, an especial Incarnation of the Godhead,—remember that I, a Mohammedan, am the first!" The Swami was deeply touched at this great outburst of devotion. The gentleman became greatly attached to the Swami, and counted himself thenceforth as one of his disciples under the name of Mohammadananda.

During his stay at Naini Tal, an incident occurred which revealed the supreme humanity of the Swami's heart. While on a visit to the temple of the Mother, the Western lady-disciples happened to enter into conversation in broken language with two *nautch* girls, whom, in their simplicity and ignorance, they took for respectable ladies. The dancing-girls coming up to them after offering worship enquired as to where to find the Swami, and on their way home came to his place and prayed to be admitted to his presence and receive his blessings. Immediately a storm of strong dissent arose over the Swami's audience at his refusal to have them turned away, but he ignoring this suffered them to come unto him. He blessed the women and spoke to them words of power, full of loving kindness, without a tinge of reproach, that moved the hearts of everyone present.

The Swami held several conversations at Naini Tal with distinguished residents; in one of them he spoke especially of the celebrated Raja Ram Mohun Roy, and of his breadth of vision and foresight, eloquently emphasising on the three dominant notes of this great teacher's message, namely, his acceptance of the Vedanta, his preaching of patriotism and his equal love for the Hindu and the

Koviloor Digital Library

Mohammedan. These had also been, he said, the dominant factors in his own career.

As a striking incident of the great ignorance of the masses in the West, with reference to religion, he related to them an amusing story. He said, "There is the story of a bishop who went to visit a mine one day. He addressed the labourers and tried to convince them of the grand truths of the Bible. In conclusion, he asked, 'Do you know Christ?' One of them responded enquiringly, 'Well, what is his number?' Poor fellow, he thought that if the bishop would tell him Christ's number, he could readily find him out from among the gang of working-men." Then, becoming serious, the Swami would say, "Unlike the Asiatics, the Westerners are not deeply spiritual. Religious thoughts do not permeate the masses.....The immorality prevalent amongst Western peoples would strike an Indian visiting London or New York as far worse than his idea of hell. Hyde Park in London shows in broad daylight scenes which would repel an Asiatic, however degraded he might be."

"The lower classes in the West," he continued, "are not only ignorant of their Scriptures, and immoral, but they are rude and vulgar. One day as I was passing through the streets of London, in my Eastern garb, the driver of a coal-cart, tickled with the novelty and strangeness of my dress, hurled a lump of coal at me. Fortunately it passed by my ear without hurting me."

At Naini Tal he met Jogesh Chandra Dutt, whom he had known in his school-days at the Metropolitan Institution, and whom he had seen in the previous year at Murree. Jogesh Babu proposed to the Swami the advisability of raising funds wherewith to send young graduates to England to study for the Civil Service, so that they having returned to India would help her cause in various ways. But the Swami made the following reply disapproving of the idea: "Nothing of the kind, my man! These fellows would, mostly, turn outlandish in their ideas and would prefer to associate, on their return, with the Europeans. Of that you may be

Koviloor Digital Library

sure ! They would live for themselves and copy European dress, diet, manners and everything else, and forget the cause of their own country." Speaking of the lethargy and apathy of the Indians for the material improvement of their country and their lack of enterprise, especially in industrial lines, he literally wept with pain. The tears running down his face moved the audience deeply. Jogesh Babu who was present with his friend, Babu Brahmananda Singh, M. A., the then Head-master of the Rampur State College and subsequently one of the directors of the Upper India Paper Mills of Lucknow, writes :—

"I shall never forget that scene in my life ! He was a Tyagi, he had renounced the world, and yet India was in the inmost depth of his soul. India was his love, he felt and wept for India, he died for India. India throbbed in his breast, beat in his pulses, in short, was inseparably bound up with his very life....."

Koviloor Digital Library

CVIII.

TALKS WITH WESTERN DISCIPLES AT ALMORA.

Leaving Naini Tal for Almora late in the afternoon, the Swami and his large party were overtaken by night on their way through dense forests. Preceded by torches and lanterns they journeyed on and on, in silence and starlight, conscious only of the solemn grandeur of the mountains, till they reached a quaintly-placed Dak-bungalow under the shadow of great trees. The Swami was, as usual, all along entertaining, and full of fun, but full, before all, of the poetry of weird "night scenes." Always attentive to the comfort of his guests and his companions, he saw to their wants and himself supervised the cooking, which was his favourite recreation, and other arrangements necessary for a short tour in the hills. On the third day the party arrived in Almora, the European disciples enamoured especially all the way with the great beauty of scene that was everywhere visible along the winding mountain paths.

In Almora the Swami with his *gurubhâis* and Sannyâsin disciples became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, at Thompson House, while his Western disciples took a house near by. It was the Swami's habit, after having risen early and taken a walk with his *gurubhâis*, to visit the house of Mrs. Bull and her guests, where after joining in their early breakfast, he held conversations for some hours on all conceivable topics. It was here, especially, for several weeks of their sojourn in Almora, that the Sister Nivedita, who was regarded by this time by the Indian people and communities as the spiritual daughter of the Swami, which she really was, received her great training at the hands of her Master. It was a training which revealed as much the greatness of the Master himself as the enormous difficulty and struggle which confront the European mind, because of its most cherished

Koviloor Digital Library

prepossessions, in identifying itself with Indian ideals and Indian culture. Between these two strong personalities a conflict of wills commenced. The Sister's whole mental outlook was aggressively Occidental and intensely English. Consequently, almost all along the line of the contact between her own mind and her Master's, points of supreme distinction were emphasised ; and the Swami, because he wanted to infuse into her his very passionate love of India, did not hesitate to strike at the root of her racial self-sufficiency and bitter obstinacy and to make constant "assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic...," which had formed the Sister's entire culture. The Swami himself was merciless, speaking intellectually. Concerning this period of trial the Sister Nivedita speaking of herself writes many years later as follows :—

" But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this ; never the dictating of opinion or creed ; never more than emancipation from partiality. Even at the end of the terrible experience, when this method, as regarded race and country, was renounced, never to be taken up systematically again, the Swami did not call for any confession of faith, any declaration of new opinion. He dropped the whole question. His listener went free. But he had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her to rest, until later, by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments stood rationalised and accounted for. * * * But at the time they were a veritable lion in the path, and remained so until she had grasped the folly of allowing anything whatever to obscure to her the personality that was here revealing itself. * * * In every case it had been some ideal of the past that had raised a barrier to the movement of her sympathy, and surely it is always so. It is the worships of one era which forge the fetters of the next.

"These morning talks at Almora then, took the form of assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic, or of long comparisons of Indian and European history and sentiments, often containing extended observations of very great value. One characteristic of the Swami was the habit of attacking the abuses of a country or society open-

Koviloor Digital Library

ly and vigorously when he was in its midst, whereas after he had left it, it would often seem as if nothing but its virtues were remembered by him. He was always testing his disciples, and the manner of these particular discourses was probably adopted in order to put to the proof the courage and sincerity of one who was both woman and European."

Thus his intellectual conflict with the Sister resulted day after day in a gradual Hinduising, or better said, Indianising of her mind. He, however, admired this hesitation on her part in accepting foreign ideas as superior to such as by birth, education and experience she had been habituated to regard as incomparable; and once, he comforted her with the remark that in his own case it had been a similar fight with his own Master in the acceptance of ideas.

How this constant clash and conflict of sentiments came to an end giving birth to peace, may be best told here in the passionate language of the Sister herself, exposing the depth of her feeling and realisation :—

"And then a time came when one of the older ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however, he returned, and finding us together in the Verandah, he turned to her and said, with the simplicity of a child, 'You were right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace.' Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exaltation came into his voice as he said, 'See! The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him.....It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments. And I have told its story, only that I may touch upon its sequel. Long, long ago, Sri Ramakrishna had told his disciples that the day would come when his beloved 'Noren' would manifest his own great gift of bestowing knowledge with a touch. That evening at Almora, I proved the truth of this prophecy. For alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite Good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me. I learnt, too, on the physical plane, the simple everyday reality of the experience related in the Hindu books on religious psychology.

Koviloor Digital Library

And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation, only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place."

The Swami's discussions and teachings in these days that are recorded, were given to his European disciples especially, and also were of great value for his own countrymen, a veritable university course of universal knowledge. His thought touched all angles of vision, and through him were made visible vital aspects of human wisdom in the light of the Supreme Realisation. Some of these morning talks at Almora have been recorded by the Sister Nivedita in her charming little book, "Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda", from which we cannot do better than quote the following extracts, which though lengthy will be found most interesting and instructive :—

"The first morning, the talk was that of the central ideals of civilisation,— in the West, truth, in the East, chastity. He justified Hindu marriage-customs, as springing from the pursuit of this ideal, and from the woman's need of protection, in combination. And he traced out the relation of the whole subject to the Philosophy of the Absolute.

"Another morning he began by observing that as there were four main castes,—Brâhman, Kshattriya, Bunea, Sudra,—so there were four great national functions, the religious or priestly, fulfilled by the Hindus; the military, by the Roman Empire; the mercantile, by England to-day; and the democratic, by America in the future. And here he launched off into a glowing prophetic forecast of how America would yet solve the problems of the Sudra,—the problems of freedom and co-operation,—and turned to relate to a non-American listener, the generosity of the arrangements which that people had attempted to make for their aborigines.

"Again, it would be an eager *résumé* of the history of India or of the Moguls whose greatness never wearied him. Every now and then, throughout the summer, he would break out into descriptions of Delhi and Agra. Once he described the Taj as 'a dimness, and again a dimness, and there—a grave!' Another time, he spoke of Shah Jehan, and then, with a burst of enthusiasm,—'Ah! *He* was the glory of his line! A feeling for, and discrimination of beauty that are unparalleled in history. And an artist himself! I have seen a manuscript illuminated by him, which is one of the art-treasures of India. What a genius!' Oftener still, it was Akbar of whom he would tell, almost with tears in his

Koviloor Digital Library

voice, and a passion easier to understand, beside that undomed tomb, open to sun and wind, the grave of Secundra at Agra.

"But all the more universal forms of human feeling were open to the Master. In one mood he talked of China as if she were the treasure-house of the world, and told us of the thrill with which he saw inscriptions in old Bengali (Kutil ?) characters, over the doors of Chinese temples. Few things could be more eloquent of the vagueness of Western ideas regarding Oriental peoples than the fact that one of his listeners alleged untruthfulness as a notorious quality of that race. As a matter of fact the Chinese are famous in the United States, where they are known as business men, for their remarkable commercial integrity, developed to a point far beyond that of the Western requirement of the written word. So the objection was an instance of misrepresentation, which, though disgraceful, is nevertheless too common. But in any case the Swami would have none of it. Untruthfulness ! Social rigidity ! What were these, except very, very relative terms ? And as to untruthfulness in particular, could commercial life, or social life, or any other form of co-operation go on for a day, if men did not trust men ? Untruthfulness as a necessity of etiquette ? And how was that different from the Western idea ? Is the Englishman always glad and always sorry at the proper place ? But there is still a difference of degree ? Perhaps—but only of degree !

'Or he might wander as far afield as Italy, that 'greatest of the countries of Europe, land of religion and of art ; alike of imperial organisation and of Mazzini ;—mother of ideas, of culture, and of freedom ! '

"One day it was Sivaji and the Mahrattas and the year's wandering as a *Sannyâsi*, that won him home to Raigarh. 'And to this day,' said the Swami, 'authority in India dreads the *Sannyâsi*, lest he conceal beneath his yellow garb another Sivaji.'

"Often the enquiry, Who and what are the Aryans ?—absorbed his attention ; and, holding that their origin was complex, he would tell us how in Switzerland he had felt himself to be in China, so alike were the types. He believed too that the same was true of some parts of Norway. Then there were scraps of information about countries and physiognomies, an impassioned tale of the Hungarian scholar, who traced the Huns to Tibet, and lies buried in Darjeeling and so on. * * *

"Sometimes the Swami would deal with the rift between Brâhmans and Kshattriyas, painting the whole history of India as a struggle between the two, and showing that the latter had always embodied the rising, fetter-destroying impulses of the nation. He could give excellent reason too for the faith that was in him that the Kayasthas of modern Bengal represented the pre-Mauryan Kshattriyas. He would

Koviloor Digital Library

portray the two opposing types of culture, the one classical, intensive, and saturated with an ever-deepening sense of tradition and custom ; the other, defiant, impulsive, and liberal in its outlook. It was part of a deep-lying law of the historic development that Rama, Krishna, and Buddha had all arisen in the kingly, and not in the priestly caste. And in this paradoxical moment, Buddhism was reduced to a caste-smashing formula—'a religion invented by the Kshattriyas' as a crushing rejoinder to Brâhmanism !

"That was a great hour indeed, when he spoke of Buddha ; for, catching a word that seemed to identify him with its anti-Brâhmanical spirit, an uncomprehending listener said, 'Why, Swami, I did not know that you were a Buddhist !' 'Madam,' he said rounding on her, his whole face aglow with the inspiration of that name, 'I am the servant of the servants of the servants of Buddha. Who was there ever like Him ?—the Lord—who never performed one action for Himself—with a heart that embraced the whole world ! So full of pity that He—prince and monk—would give His life to save a little goat ! So loving that He sacrificed Himself to the hunger of a tigress !—to the hospitality of a pariah and blessed him ! And He came into my room when I was a boy and I fell at His feet ! For I knew it was the Lord Himself !'

"Many times he spoke of Buddha in this fashion, sometimes at Belur and sometimes afterwards. And once he told us the story of Ambâpâli, the beautiful courtesan who feasted Him, in words that recalled the revolt of Rossetti's great half-sonnet of Mary Magdalene :—

> 'Oh loose me ! Seest thou not my Bridegroom's face,
> That draws me to Him ? For His feet my kiss,
> My hair, my tears, He craves to-day :—And oh !
> What words can tell what other day and place
> Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His ?
> He needs me, calls me, loves me, let me go !'

"But national feeling did not have it all its own way. For one morning when the chasm seemed to be widest, there was a long talk on Bhakti—that perfect identity with the Beloved that the devotion of Râya Râmânanda, the Bengali nobleman who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, so beautifully illustrates :—

> 'Four eyes met. There were changes in two souls.
> And now I cannot remember whether he is a man
> And I a woman, or he a woman and I a man !
> All I know is, there were two, Love came, and there is one !'

"It was that same morning that he talked of the Babists of Persia,—in their era of martyrdom—of the woman who inspired and the man who worshipped and worked. And doubtless then he expatiated on that

Koviloor Digital Library

theory of his—somewhat quaint and surprising to unaccustomed minds, not so much for the matter of the statement, as for the explicitness of the expression,—of the greatness and goodness of the young, who can love without seeking personal expression for their love, and their high potentiality.

"Another day coming at sunrise when the snows could be seen, dawn-lighted, from the garden, it was Shiva and Uma on whom he dwelt,—and that was Shiva, up there, the white snow-peaks, and the light that fell upon Him was the Mother of the World! For a thought on which at this time he was dwelling much was that God *is* the Universe,—not within it, or outside it, and not the universe God or the image of God—but He it, and the All.

"Sometimes all through the summer he would sit for hours telling us stories, those cradle-tales of Hinduism, whose function is not at all that of our nursery fictions, but much more, like the man-making myths of the old Hellenic world. Best of all these I thought was the story of Shuka, and we looked on the Shiva-mountains and the bleak scenery of Almora the evening we heard it for the first time.

"Shuka, the typical Paramahamsa, refused to be born for fifteen years, because he knew that his birth would mean his mother's death. Then his father appealed to Uma, the Divine Mother. She was perpetually tearing down the veil of Mâyâ before the hidden Saint, and Vyâsa pleaded that She should cease this, or his son would never come to birth. Uma consented, for one moment only, and that moment the child was born. He came forth a young man sixteen years of age, unclothed, and went straight forward, knowing neither his father nor his mother, straight on, followed by Vyâsa. Then, coming round a mountain-pass his body melted away from him, because it was no different from the universe, and his father following and crying, 'Oh my son! Oh my son!' was answered only by the echo, 'Om! Om! Om!'—among the rocks. Then Shuka resumed his body, and came to his father to get knowledge from him. But Vyâsa found that he had none for him, and sent him to Janaka, king of Mithila, the father of Sita, if perchance he might have some to give. Three days he sat outside the royal gates, unheeded, without a change of expression or of look. The fourth day he was suddenly admitted to the king's presence with *éclat*. Still there was no change.

"Then as a test, the powerful sage who was the king's prime minister translated himself into a beautiful woman, so beautiful that every one present had to turn away from the sight of her, and none dared speak. But Shuka went up to her and drew her to sit beside him on his mat, while he talked to her of God.

Koviloor Digital Library

"Then the minister turned to Janaka saying, 'Know, oh King, if you seek the greatest man on earth, this is he !'

"'There is little more told of the life of Shuka. He is the ideal Paramahamsa. To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that One Undivided Ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute ! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of It. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss !'

"Shuka was indeed the Swami's saint. He was the type, to him, of that highest realisation to which life and the world are merely play. Long after, we learned how Sri Ramakrishna had spoken of him in his boyhood as, 'My Shuka.' And never can I forget the look, as of one gazing far into depths of joy, with which he once stood and quoted the words of Shiva, in praise of the deep spiritual significance of the Bhagavad-Gitâ, and of the greatness of Shuka—'I know (the real meaning of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gitâ), and Shuka knows, and *perhaps* Vyâsa knows—a little !'

"Another day in Almora the Swami talked of the great humanising lives that had arisen in Bengal, at the long inrolling wash of the first wave of modern consciousness on the ancient shores of Hindu culture. Of Ram Mohun Roy we had already heard from him at Naini Tal. And now of the Pundit Vidyâsâgar he exclaimed, 'There is not a man of my age in Northern India, on whom his shadow has not fallen !' It was a great joy to him to remember that these men and Sri Ramakrishna had all been born within a few miles of each other.

"The Swami introduced Vidyâsâgar to us now as 'the hero of widow remarriage, and of the abolition of polygamy.' But his favourite story about him was of that day when he went home from the Legislative Council, pondering over the question of whether or not to adopt English dress on such occasions. Suddenly some one came up to a fat Mogul who was proceeding homewards in leisurely and pompous fashion, in front of him, with the news, 'Sir, your house is on fire !' The Mogul went neither faster nor slower for this information, and presently the messenger contrived to express a discreet astonishment, whereupon his master turned on him angrily. 'Wretch !' he said, 'Am I to abandon the gait of my ancestors, because a few sticks happen to be burning ?' And Vidyâsâgar, walking behind, determined to stick to the chudder, dhoti and sandals, not even adopting coat and slippers.

"The picture of Vidyâsâgar going into retreat for a month for the study of the Shâstras, when his mother had suggested to him the re-marriage of child-widows, was very forcible. 'He came out of his retirement of opinion that they were *not* against such re-marriage, and he obtained the signatures of the Pundits that they agreed in this opinion.

Koviloor Digital Library

Then the action of certain native princes led the Pundits to abandon their own signatures, so that, had the Government not determined to assist the movement, it could not have been carried—and now,' added the Swami, 'the difficulty has an economic rather than a social basis.'

"We could believe that a man who was able to discredit polygamy by moral force alone, was 'intensely spiritual.' And it was wonderful indeed to realise the Indian indifference to a formal creed, when we heard how this giant was driven by the famine of 1864,—when 140,000 people died of hunger and disease,—to have nothing more to do with God, and become entirely agnostic in thought.

"With this man, as one of the educators of Bengal, the Swami coupled the name of David Hare, the old Scotsman and atheist to whom the clergy of Calcutta refused Christian burial. He had died of nursing an old pupil through cholera. So his own boys carried his dead body and buried it in a swamp, and made the grave a place of pilgrimage. That place has now become College Square, the educational centre, and his school is now within the University. And to this day, Calcutta students make pilgrimage to the tomb.

"On this day we took advantage of the natural turn of the conversation to cross-question the Swami as to the possible influence that Christianity might have exerted over himself. He was much amused to hear that such a statement had been hazarded, and told us with much pride of his only contact with missionary influences, in the person of his old Scotch master, Mr. Hastie. This hot-headed old man lived on nothing, and regarded his room as his boys' home as much as his own. It was he who had first sent the Swami to Sri Ramakrishna, and towards the end of his stay in India he used to say, 'Yes, my boy, you were right, you were right !—It is true that all is God !' 'I am *proud* of him !'—cried the Swami, 'but I don't think you could say that he had Christianised me much !' It appeared, indeed, that he had only been his pupil for some six months, having attended college so irregularly that the Presidency College refused to send him up for his degree, though he undertook to pass !

"We heard charming stories, too, on less serious subjects. There was the lodging-house in an American city, for instance, where he had had to cook his own food, and where he would meet, in the course of operations, 'an actress who ate roast turkey everyday, and a husband and wife who lived by making ghosts.' And when the Swami remonstrated with the husband, and tried to persuade him to give up deceiving people, saying 'You *ought* not to do this !' the wife would come up behind, and say eagerly 'Yes Sir ! That's just what I tell him ; for *he* makes all the ghosts, and Mrs. Williams takes all the money !'

"He told us also of a young engineer, an educated man, who, at a spiritualistic gathering, when the fat Mrs. Williams appeared from

Koviloor Digital Library

behind the screen as his thin mother, exclaimed 'Mother dear, how you *have* grown in the spirit-world !'

" 'At this,' said the Swami, 'my heart broke, for I thought there could be no hope for the man.' But never at a loss, he told the story of a Russian painter, who was ordered to paint the picture of a peasant's dead father, the only description given being, 'Man ! Don't I tell you he had a wart on his nose ?' When at last, therefore, the painter had made a portrait of some stray peasant, and affixed a large wart to the nose, the picture was declared to be ready, and the son was told to come and see it. He stood in front of it, greatly overcome, and said, 'Father ! Father ! How changed you are since I saw you last !' After this, the young engineer would never speak to the Swami again, which showed at least that he could see the point of a story. But at this, the Hindu monk was genuinely astonished.

* * * *

"June 9th. This Thursday morning there was a talk on Krishna. It was characteristic of the Swami's mind, and chracteristic also of the Hindu culture from which he had sprung, that he could lend himself to the enjoyment and portrayal of an idea one day, that the next would see submitted to a pitiless analysis and left slain upon the field. He was a sharer to the full in the belief of his people that, provided an idea was spiritually true and consistent, it mattered very little about its objective actuality. And this mode of thought had first been suggested to him, in his boyhood, by his own Master. He had mentioned some doubt as to the authenticity of a certain religious history. 'What !' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'do you not then think that those who could conceive such ideas must have been the thing itself ?'

"The existence of Krishna, then, like that of Christ, he often told us, 'in the general way' he doubted. Buddha and Mohammed alone, amongst religious teachers, had been fortunate enough to have 'enemies as well as friends', so that their historical careers were beyond dispute. As for Krishna, he was the most shadowy of all. 'A poet, a cowherd, a great ruler, a warrior, and a sage had all perhaps been merged in one beautiful figure, holding the Gitâ in his hand.'

"But to-day, Krishna was 'the most perfect of the Avatârs.' And a wonderful picture followed, of the charioteer who reined in his horses, while he surveyed the field of battle and in one brief glance noted the disposition of the forces, at the same moment that he commenced to utter to his royal pupil the deep spiritual truths of the Gitâ.

" * * * And the Swami was fond of a statement,.....that the Krishna-worshippers of India had exhausted the possibilities of the romantic motive in lyric poetry.

* * * * *

Koviloor Digital Library

"June 10th. It was our last afternoon at Almora that we heard the story of the fatal illness of Sri Ramakrishna. Dr. Mohendra Lall Sirkar had been called in, and had pronounced the disease to be cancer of the throat, leaving the young disciples with many warnings as to its infectious nature. Half an hour later, 'Noren', as he then was, came in and found them huddled together, discussing the dangers of the case. He listened to what they had been told, and then, looking down, saw at his feet the cup of gruel that had been partly taken by Sri Ramakrishna and which must have contained in it, the germs of the fatal discharges of mucus and *pus*, as it came out in his baffled attempts to swallow the thing, on account of the stricture of the food-passage in the throat. He picked it up, and drank from it, before them all. Never was the infection of cancer mentioned amongst the disciples again."

While at Almora he also met numerous residents of the place and distinguished persons from other parts of India, who had come up there to spend the summer months, and them all he instructed in the Dharma. During this time also, he twice met Mrs. Annie Besant, who was then living as the guest of Mr. G. N. Chakravarti.

The first meeting took place at the house of the latter whose wife invited Swamiji, who was known to her from the days of her girlhood. Shortly after, Mrs. Besant was invited to tea in his host's house to meet the Swami, and with her, on both the occasions, he had a long and pleasant conversation.

Though full of fun at times, the Swami spoke with wonder of the torture of life, and would be seen often to enter into moods of meditation and immediate vision. A strange longing for quiet obsessed him and on Wednesday, May the twenty-fifth, he left the circle of his friends and disciples and retired to Shiyâdevi, some distance off from Almora. There he was in the silence of the forests for ten hours each day, but on returning to his tent in the evenings he found himself surrounded with so much eager attendance as to break the mood, and so he came back on Saturday. But he was radiant. He had made the discovery for himself that he could be again "the old-time Sannyâsin, able to go barefoot, and endure heat, cold, and scanty fare, unspoilt by the West." On the follow-

Koviloor Digital Library

ing Monday, the thirtieth, the Swami accompanied by his host and hostess again left Almora on a week's visit to a place further away, partly seeking seclusion, and partly on business, in connection with a possible purchase of an estate for his monastery, which did not, however, come about.

When he returned on Sunday evening, the fifth of June, it was to receive two terrible shocks,—the news of the death of Pavhari Baba, whom he loved, as he had said once, "second only to Sri Ramakrishna", and the death of his dear disciple, Mr. Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin, who was last heard of with Miss Muller in Almora, had gone on to Madras, where he accepted an offer to join the staff of the "Madras Mail", and had died on the second of June at Ootacamund, from enteric fever, while on duty there. The sad news was not broken to him till the next morning, when he came early to Mrs. Bull's Bungalow in a great mood. The blow fell quietly at the time and the Swami was calm about his loss. He sat down and chatted quietly with his Western disciples. That morning he was full of *Bhakti* passing through asceticism far out of the reach of the sweet snares of personality. To quote Sister Nivedita :—

"'What is this idea of Bhakti without renunciation ?' he said. 'It is most pernicious !' And standing there for an hour or more, he talked of the awful self-discipline that one must impose on oneself, if one would indeed be unattached, of the requisite nakedness of selfish motives, and of the danger that at any moment the most flowerlike soul might have its petals soiled with the grosser stains of life. He told the story of an Indian nun who was asked when a man could be certain of safety on this road, and who sent back, for answer, a little plate of ashes. For the fight against passion was long and fierce, and at any moment the conqueror might become the conquered.

"And as he talked, it seemed that this banner of renunciation was the flag of a great victory, that poverty and self-mastery were the only fit raiment for the soul that would wed the Eternal Bridegroom, and that life was a long opportunity for giving, and the thing not taken away from us was to be mourned as lost....."

It is too much to presume that the Swami's tender

Koviloor Digital Library

heart would not be sorely afflicted by the loss of one of his most loving disciples who had served him so many years with the warmest devotion. As hours passed by, he "complained of the weakness that brought the image of his most faithful disciple constantly into his mind. It was no more manly, he protested, to be thus ridden by one's memory, than to retain the characteristics of the fish or the dog. Man must conquer this illusion, and know that the dead are here beside us and with us, as much as ever. It is their absence and separation that are a myth. And then he would break out again with some bitter utterance against the folly of imagining Personal Will to guide the universe. 'As if,' he exclaimed, 'it would not be one's right and duty to fight such a God and slay Him, for killing Goodwin !—And Goodwin, if he had lived, could have done so much !' And in India one was free to recognise this as the most religious, because the most unflinchingly truthful, mood of all !"

In one of these days he took away a few faulty lines of someone's writing and brought back a beautiful little poem, "*Requiescat in Pace*", (See "Complete Works," page 920), in which nothing of the original was left. This was sent to the widowed mother, as his memorial of her son. And of him he also wrote :—

"The debt of gratitude I owe him can never be repaid, and those who think they have been helped by any thought of mine, ought to know that almost every word of it was published through the untiring and most unselfish exertions of Mr. Goodwin. In him I have lost a friend true as steel, a disciple of never-failing devotion, a worker who knew not what tiring was, and the world is less rich by one of those few who are born, as it were, to live only for others."

The Swami grew restless and impatient and yearned to be away and alone. He could no longer bear to remain in that place where the news of his great sorrow had reached him, and letters had to be written and received constantly, which only aggravated his wound. He said one day, that Sri Ramakrishna while seeming to be all *Bhakti* was really, within, all *Jnâna* ; but he himself, apparently all *Jnâna*, was full of *Bhakti*, and as such was apt to be as weak as any woman. It was decided to spend some time in Kashmir. Therefore on the eleventh of June, he with only the lady-disciples who had accompanied him from

Koviloor Digital Library

Calcutta left Almora for Kashmir, all as guests of Mrs. Ole Bull.

But before describing his travels in the immediate future, a fact of supreme import both to the Swami himself and to his mission must be mentioned,—namely, that while in Almora he had arranged with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and the Swami Swarupananda to revive the defunct magazine, "Prabuddha Bharata," the editor of which, B. R. Rajam Iyer, a gifted young man of twenty-six, a real Vedantin and an ardent admirer of the Swami, had just passed away. The Swami had always a special affection for this paper financed and managed by his Madrasi disciples. Coming up to Almora, as also many a time before, he had spoken of his intention of establishing papers in English and in the vernaculars to be conducted by his brother-monks and his disciples, as he felt more and more their need and value,—in common with public preaching, and starting monastic centres and Homes of Service,—in educating Modern India with his Master's Gospel as well as his own message. He had even once thought of bringing out a daily paper, a dream of his life which never materialised. However, he left for Kashmir with the satisfaction of knowing that the "Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India" was to be transferred to Almora, as soon as the necessary arrangements were completed, with the Swami Swarupananda as the editor and Mr. Sevier as the manager. The latter also came forward with an offer to meet all preliminary costs of purchasing and bringing up a hand-press, types, papers and other materials required for the purpose. Reaching Srinagar the Swami was anxiously looking forward to the appearance of the first number of his own journal. And at the end of the month he sent an inspiring poem of invocation, "To the Awakened India" (See "Complete Works," page 919), charging it to wake up once more and resume its march "for working wonders new," "till Truth, bare Truth in all its glory shines!"

Koviloor Digital Library

CIX.

DAYS OF TRAVELLING AND TRAINING: IN KASHMIR.

The journey down to the plains through the hills covered with almost tropical forests all around was delightful. On the way the Swami pointed out a certain hill-side inhabited, so legend holds, by a race of centaur-like phantoms, and he told of his own experience of once having actually seen such phantoms there and only afterwards heard the folk-tale. On the twelfth of June the party rested above the beautiful lake, Bhim Tal. In his talks in the afternoon with his companions, the Swami translated some of the most charming Vedic verses, and songs of Soordas and other poet-devotees, in his strikingly intense and poetic way of expression, intonating his voice as he chanted each line in Sanskrit in half-meditative mood, and gave its English form. The Rudra-prayer was thus rendered by him :—

"From the unreal lead us to the Real.
From darkness lead us unto Light.
From death lead us to Immortality.
Reach us through and through our self.
And evermore protect us—Oh Thou Terrible !—
From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face."

And then the psalm of invocation of peace and benediction :—

"The blissful winds are sweet to us.
The seas are showering bliss on us.
May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us.
May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us.
May the cattle give us bliss.
O Father in Heaven, be Thou blissful unto us !
The very dust of the earth is full of bliss.
It is all bliss—all bliss—all bliss!"

The next day the Pine and Deodar forests and the hills were left behind, and now the journey would be through the

Koviloor Digital Library

Punjab to distant Rawalpindi. As the train sped on into the Punjab, the Swami spoke with such special love of the province that it seemed as if he was born and bred there. His companions realised now how it was that some people in the Punjab, who had come to know him intimately during his visit to Lahore last year, declared that they had found in him a rare mixture of Guru Nanak and Guru Govind, their first teacher and their last. With true national pride he spoke of the heroism of the Sikhs with their ancient war-cry of *Wâ Guru ki fateh*—"Victory to the Guru !" He spoke of the *Grantha Sâheb*, the Scripture of the Sikhs, and of the succession of brilliant *tyâgi* teachers of the province, who had brought the highest doctrines of the Vedanta philosophy to every door, so that even to-day the peasant-girl says that her spinning wheel repeats *Soham ! Soham !*—"I am He ! I am He !" Then turning his gaze with a sudden flash further away into the dim past he made them hear, as it were, the thunder of the onrolling waves of Alexander's army on the banks of the Indus, and made them see before their eyes—so vividly was the whole panorama presented to them—the ever-advancing tides of conquest of the great Greek General being checked and rolled back, never to return again ! He spoke of the rise of Ṣhandragupta and the development of the Buddhistic Empire. He described the beauties and the peculiarities of the Gandhara sculptures, and was indignant in his repudiation of the absurd claim put forward by European scholars that India had sat at the feet of the Greeks in matters of art.

Having reached Rawalpindi, the party drove by tonga to Murree, where they stayed for three days, and thence, partly by tonga and partly by boat, they made their way to Srinagar, arriving there on the twenty-second of June. On the way, from Kohala to Baramulla, the Swami, in the course of his instructions to his companions, frankly spoke of the modern abuses of Hinduism, and uncompromisingly denounced the evil practices prevalent in the name of religion, in his own land, known as *Vâmâchâra*. This is men-

Koviloor Digital Library

tioned because it reveals that the Swami could see the faults as well as the virtues of his motherland, and that he kept nothing back from his Western disciples in his general teachings concerning India and the worst things that might be urged against any of his people and their creeds. And he could denounce as no one could, when denunciation was imperative.

On June the nineteenth, passing through the valley of the Jhelum, the Swami seemed full of reminiscence. Talking of *Brahmavidyâ*, the path of realisation of the One Absolute, and of how love conquers all evil, he related the story of a classmate of his, who subsequently became a rich man. The latter was suffering long from an obscure disease which baffled the skill of the doctors. Naturally, he grew despondent of recovery and of life in general, and turned to religion and thoughts of *Vairâgyam*, as men do in such a position. Coming to hear that the Swami had become a religious man and an adept in Yoga he sent for him, begging him to come and see him once, which he did. As the Master sat at his bedside, there came to him the Upanishadic *sloka*—"Him the Brâhmana conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the Brâhmana. Him the Kshattriya conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the Kshattriya. And him the universe conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the universe." Curiously, this acted like a charm on the sick man and the effect was miraculous. He grasped the theme even with the repeating of the *sloka*, felt strength in the body as he had never done for a long time, and since then made quick and unbroken progress towards recovery! "And so," said the Swami, "though I often say strange things and angry things, yet remember that in my heart I never seriously mean to preach anything but love! All these things will come right, only when we realise that we love each other."

The readers of the Swami's "Life' will remember what fascination the Great God Shiva exercised on his mind in the days of his childhood. Speaking of this he said to his

Koviloor Digital Library

companions that his first act of revolt against *deshâchâra*, or the established usage of the country, had been perpetrated at the age of five, when he insisted on lifting the tumbler of water to his mouth with his left hand at the time of having his meal, and had consequently a stormy argument with his mother to the effect that this action was much cleaner when his right hand was soiled by eating with his fingers. But the orthodox lady was as unconvinced as her son was stubborn. The only effective way by which she could drive her arguments home, against such sacrilege and similar perversities, was to take the drastic measure of putting him under the water-tap, saying, "Shiva! Shiva!" Fearing that Shiva would be angry with him, he would say to himself, "No, no, not this time again!" and would be quiet and submissive. As he grew older his love for Him ripened also, and now being in the Himalayas, the abode of the Lord of monks and Yogis, the thought of Shiva was uppermost in his mind, and he, as always before, never tired of dwelling on Him with all the passion of his soul. And to his disciples he would speak of the Pauranic conception of the oneness of Shiva and His consort, Uma, under the guise of half-man and half-woman, representing the junction of two great streams of thought, Monasticism and Mother-worship, or the vision of truth inseparable with renunciation through the philosophy of the Terrible, and love supreme, sweet and sublime. And "he understood, he said, for the first time this summer, the meaning of the nature-story that made the Ganges fall on the head of the Great God, and wander in and out amongst His matted locks, before she found an outlet on the plains below. He had searched long, he said, for the words that the rivers and waterfalls uttered, amongst the mountains, before he had realised that it was the eternal cry 'Byom! Byom! Hara! Hara!' 'Yes!' he said of Shiva one day, 'He is the Great God, calm, beautiful, and silent! and I am His great worshipper.'"

At Baramulla, and as the party entered further into Kashmir, the Swami's mind was filled with the legends with which the Kashmiris have peopled the cathedral rocks, the many ruins and the winding passes. From a scenic point of view alone, the journey was intensely fascinating. Groups of singing

Koviloor Digital Library

peasants, or pious pilgrims and monks wending their way on foot through tortuous paths to the sacred shrines, the Irises in bloom on every hill-side, the green fields, the beautiful valleys ringed round with snow-mountains, and the Poplars in the neighbourhood of Islamabad and the immense Chennaar trees to be seen everywhere, were in themselves pictures never to be forgotten.

No matter where he travelled, whether it was in the East or in the West, the Swami loved to identify himself with the habits of the people. So here in Kashmir one sees him drinking Kashmiri tea from a *samovar* and eating the jam of the country after the fashion of the people.

As the Swami had brought no attendants with him, he had himself to look after every little detail and make all the necessary arrangements on the way for the comfort of the party, and these offices he performed with the keenest pleasure. Arriving at Baramulla on the twentieth, the party started in three *dungâs*, or house-boats, at about four o'clock in the afternoon for Srinagar, which they reached on the third day. On the next day of their trip higher up the river Jhelum, when the boats were moored by a village, the Swami took his companions out for a long walk across the fields and turned into a neighbouring farm-yard with a view to introduce them to a woman, of whose faith and pride he had spoken not only to them and others in private talks but even in his presidential speech at the meeting in Calcutta a few months ago in which the Sister Nivedita lectured. In that farm-yard they found seated under a tree a handsome elderly woman spinning wool, while round her, helping her, were her two daughters-in-law and their children. The Swami had called at this farm last year to beg for a glass of water, and after having drunk it had asked her in a mild tone, "And what is your religion, Mother?" "I thank God, Sir," the woman had said with triumph in her voice, "by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussulman!" The Swami was on the present occasion warmly welcomed by the whole family who also showed every courtesy to his friends.

Koviloor Digital Library

In one of these walks the Sister Nivedita complained to the Master of the abandonment of feeling which she had seen in Kalighat. "Why do they kiss the ground before the Image?" she asked. A great hush came over the Swami's voice as he stood still and made the characteristic reply, "Is it not the same thing to kiss the ground before that Image, as to kiss the ground before these mountains?"

While the party lived in the *dungas* on the river Jhelum in and about Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, from June the twenty-second until July the twenty-fifth, the whole time became an unparalleled educational opportunity for those who had accompanied the Swami, and was filled with many delightful incidents. Various excursions were made to notable places near-by. Sometimes conversation became so intense that the Swami would forget all thought of food. In these days the subjects of his conversations were as varied as usual. Sometimes it would be on the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, especially the position of Srinagar under Kanishka, or the morality of Buddhism and the religious imperialism of Asoka, or the history of Shiva-worship. One day he spoke of the conquests of Genghis Khan, of whom he said, "He was not a vulgar aggressor", and compared him with Napoleon and Alexander, saying that he, like the other two, "was inspired with the thought of unity, and he wanted to unify his world." And he went on to say that those three were perhaps one soul, "manifesting itself in three different conquests," in the same way as that one Soul might have come again and again as Krishna, Buddha and Christ to fulfil the divine purpose of bringing about the unity of man in God in the world of religious realities. Now the teaching would be on Bhakti, the forms of meditation, the philosophy of Plato and his doctrine of Ideas, or the Hindu theory which, in the West men like Saint Francis of Assisi could understand, namely, that the whole *Leelâ* in the Creation of the Cosmos was only play,—play,—play. Or it might be leadership, or the popular stories from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata of

Koviloor Digital Library

which he would speak. Then it would be on the life of the Western monk, Thomas à Kempis, or of Tulsidas, or of Sri Ramakrishna, and he would emphasise his points with choice quotations from their sayings. Often the talk would be on the Gita, "that wonderful poem, without one note in it of weakness or unmanliness."

Hardly had he been in Kashmir for a week than the Master frequently desired to be alone, and now and then he would suddenly break away from his companions to return unexpectedly from solitude with added radiance of personality and ever-deepening utterance of Knowledge. In such times as these, the Swami would say now and again, "It is a sin even to *think* of the body," or "It is wrong to *manifest* power!" Or Again, "Things do not grow better. They remain as they were. It is *we* who grow better, by the changes we make in them." He was constantly interpreting human life as the expression of God. Life in society seemed to be an agony to him. The impulse of the old-time monk seeking quiet and self-effacement often haunted him. Speaking of these days the Sister Nivedita writes :—

"The life of the silent ashen-clad wanderer, or the hidden hermit, he thought of, it would now and then seem, as the lover might think of the beloved. At no time would it have surprised us, had someone told us that to-day or to-morrow he would be gone for ever, that we were now istening to his voice for the last time. He, and necessarily we, in all that depended on him, were as straws carried on the Ganges of the Eternal Will. At any moment It might reveal Itself to him as Silence. At any moment life in the world might end for him.

"This plan-less-ness was not an accident. Never can I forget the disgust with which he turned on myself once, a couple of years later, when I had offered him some piece of worldly wisdom regarding his own answer to a letter which he had brought for me to see. 'Plans! Plans!' he exclaimed in indignation. 'That is why you Western people can never create a religion! If any of you ever did, it was only a few Catholic saints, who had no plans. Religion was never, never preached by planners!' "

It can be readily understood that, living in the shadow of that great life ever revealing the burning passions of the soul for the highest, it became self-evident to the Western

Koviloor Digital Library

pilgrims that plan-less-ness was with him a trait earned by hard monastic discipline, and that solitude and silence was the greatest medium of self-development.

"Nothing," said the Swami, "better illustrated to his own mind, the difference between Eastern and Western methods of thought, than the European idea that a man could not live alone for twenty years and remain quite sane, taken side by side with the Indian notion that till a man had been alone for twenty years, he could not be regarded as perfectly himself."

Among the small excursions made at this time in the company of his disciples was the one, on the twenty-ninth of June, to the temple of Takt-i-Suleiman, situated on the summit of a small mountain two to three thousand feet high. Beholding the beautiful and the extensive scenery of the place the Swami exclaimed, "Look! What genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See! The Takt commands the whole of Kashmir. The rock of Hari Parvat rises red out of blue water, like a lion couchant, crowned. And the temple of Marttanda has the valley at its feet!" Then he launched into a long discourse on the innate love of nature in the Hindu character, which showed itself in its choice of sites of peculiar beauty and importance for building temples, hermitages and architectural monuments.

Always given to merriment, the Swami postponed a contemplated journey to organise for his American friends a surprise celebration of the Fourth of July, their national festival in commemoration of "Independence Day." Taking the one non-American member of the party into his confidence, he went out late on the afternoon of the third and brought a Brâhman tailor in great excitement, asking her to explain to the man how to make an imitation of the national American flag. The stars and stripes were very crudely represented on the piece of cotton that was nailed, with branches of evergreens, to the head of the dining-room-boat, where an early tea was arranged for. As his own special contribution to the event, he wrote a poem which was read aloud by way of greeting, entitled, "To the Fourth of July", a passionate

Koviloor Digital Library

utterance of his own longing for the Final Freedom of the Infinite. The poem in the lapse of time proved indeed to have been penned in a prophetic vein, for on that very day, four years later, his shackles of work broken, he entered in "springing joy" into that Final Freedom concerning which he had written. This celebration took place on an excursion from Srinagar to the Dahl Lake, where they visited the Shalimar Bagh of Nur Mahal and the Nishat Bagh, two beautiful gardens, laid out by the Mogul Emperors as their summer residences in Kashmir.

On the journey back to Srinagar the Swami was full of the ideal of renunciation, and carried away by the mood in which he was then, he spoke in an uncompromising spirit and with scorn in his voice against those who sought to glorify the worldly life. "Is it so easy," he exclaimed, "to be Janaka? To sit on a throne absolutely unattached? Caring nothing for wealth or fame, for wife or child? One after another in the West has told me that he had reached this. But I could only say—'Such great men are not born in India!'" And then turning to the other side he said, "Never forget to say to yourself, and to teach to your children,—'As the difference between a firefly and the blazing sun, between the infinite ocean and a little pond, between a mustard-seed and the mountain of Meru, such is the difference between the householder and the Sannyâsin!'" He would bless, he said, even the fraudulent Sâdhus and those who failed to keep to their vows, "inasmuch as they also have witnessed to the ideal, and so are in some degree the cause of the success of others!" Had it not been for the *gerrua*, the emblem of monasticism, he pointed out, luxury and worldliness would have robbed man of all his manliness. The outpourings of his heart at such moments were a lesson to those who listened to him, and not unoften they would feel themselves brought face to face with the invisible and absolute.

A desire for quiet and peace seemed to grow more and more upon the Swami in these days, and the absence of two of his American disciples on a short visit to Gulmarg, he

Koviloor Digital Library

thought a fit opportunity to quit his present environment. Again revealing his plans to none, he intended making the pilgrimage to the far-famed Shiva shrine of Amarnath, travelling by the route of Sonamarg. His disciples came to know of this news from many different sources on the tenth of July, and also that he had wandered forth penniless and alone. They, however, were not anxious on his account as they knew the tendency of the wandering monk in him. But on the fifteenth he returned, as the route he had chosen was found impracticable, certain glaciers having given way owing to the summer being unusually hot. Everyone marked that the solitude into which he had entered and the austerities he had undergone, had strengthened a thousandfold the effulgence of his soul.

The next day, or the day after, talking of Bhakti, of Shiva and Uma, and of Radha and Krishna, he became so absorbed that he paid no heed to the repeated calls for breakfast. The little group of listeners could plainly see how intolerable was the thought of food to him who was dwelling on the heights of love of God. He went at last reluctantly, saying, "When one has all this Bhakti what does one want with food ?" He came back quickly again without breaking the mood and resumed the subject.

On the eighteenth the whole party drifted down to Islamabad. On the afternoon of the next day they sought out and found the quaint old Temple of Pandrenthan, sunken in a scum-covered pond within a wood by the side of the Jhelum. When inside the temple the Swami introduced his companions to the study of Indian archæology which was quite new to them, and taught them how to observe the decorations in the interior with its sun-medallion and beautiful sculpture, in low relief, of male and female figures intertwined with serpents. Among the notable outside carvings was a fine image of Buddha, standing, with His hands uplifted, in one of the trefoil arches of the eastern door, and, elsewhere, was a much defaced frieze of a seated woman, with a tree,—evidently of Buddha's mother,—Mâyâ Devi. The temple itself was

Koviloor Digital Library

built of heavy grey limestone, of superb masonry, and resembled a tapering pyramid. It must have been older than Marttanda, dating perhaps from Kanishka's time, 150 A. D. To the Swami, writes the Sister Nivedita :—

"The place was delightfully suggestive It was a direct memorial of Buddhism, representing one of the four religious periods into which he had already divided the History of Kashmir: 1. Tree and Snake-worship, from which dated all the names of the springs ending in Nâg, as Vêrnâg, and so on ; 2. Buddhism; 3. Hinduism, in the form of Sun-worship; and 4. Mohammedanism. Sculpture, he told us, was the characteristic art of Buddhism, and the sun-medallion, or lotus, one of its commonest ornaments. The figures with the serpents referred to pre-Buddhism....."

It was the time of sunset when the party returned to their boats. The presence of that silent chapel and of the Buddha in the wood must have moved the Swami deeply, for on that evening his mind was overflowing with historical comparisons full of new and unthought-of generalisations. He spoke, for instance, of the points of similarity between the Vedic and the Roman Catholic ritual, holding the latter to have been derived from the former through Buddhism which was only an offshoot of Hinduism. "Vedic ritual", he pointed out, "has its Mass, the offering of food to God, your Blessed Sacrament, our *prasad*. Only it is offered sitting, not kneeling, as is common in hot countries. They kneel in Thibet. Then, too, Vedic ritual has its lights, incense, music." When argued that Hinduism had no Common Prayer, he flashed down on the opponent, saying, "No ! and neither had Christianity ! That is pure Protestantism and Protestantism took it from the Mohammedans, perhaps through Moorish influence ! Mohammedanism is the only religion that has completely broken down the idea of the priest. The leader of prayer stands with his back to the people, and only the reading of the Koran may take place from the pulpit. Protestantism is an approach to this."

"Even the tonsure," he continued, "existed in India, in the shaven head.....The monk and nun both existed in

Koviloor Digital Library

pre-Buddhistic Hinduism. Europe gets her orders from the Thebaid."

Almost the whole of Christianity, he believed, was Aryan,—Indian and Egyptian ideas tinctured with Judaism and Hellenism. Of the historicity of Jesus, he said, he had doubted in a way since his significant dream off Crete. However, he said,—"Two things stand out as personal living touches in the life of Christ,—the woman taken in adultery,—the most beautiful story in literature,—and the woman at the well. How strangely true is this last, to Indian life! A woman, coming to draw water, finds, seated at the well-side, a yellow-clad monk. He asks her for water. Then He teaches her, and does a little mind-reading and so on. Only in an Indian story, when she went to call the villagers, to look and listen, the monk would have taken his chance, and fled to the forest!"

Of the prominent figures of Christianity he remarked that only of Saint Paul could history be sure, "and he was not an eye-witness, and according to his own showing was capable of Jesuitry—'by all means save souls'—isn't it?" He preferred Strauss to Renan, whose "Life of Jesus is mere froth," and felt also that the Acts and Epistles were older than the Gospels. Saint Paul's greatness lay in that he had galvanised an obscure Nazarene sect of great antiquity, which "furnished the mythic personality as a centre of worship." But at the bottom was the great Rabbi, Hillel, who was responsible for the teachings of Jesus. "The Resurrection," he said, "was, of course, simply spring cremation. Only the rich Greeks and Romans had had cremation anyway, and the new sun-myth would only stop it amongst the few."

That the Swami's views are fundamentally in accord with such eminent Christian scholars as Mr. J. M. Robertson, Dr. A. Drews and Prof. W. B. Smith, we find from a recently published book called, "The Historical Christ", by Fred. C. Conybeare, M. A., F. B. A., of Oxford. *The Saturday Westminster Gazette* of May 30, 1914, in summing up the theories of the three above-named critics says:—

Kovilloor Digital Library

"These writers maintain that Jesus of Nazareth never existed. What, according to them, lies behind the Christian religion is a secret sect of Jews in Jerusalem, who, at the beginning of our era, celebrated ritual dramas once a year, in which was represented the ceremonial slaying of a Sun-God-Saviour Joshua. This Joshua, whose mythical sufferings and death were thus annually commemorated, was the analogue of Osiris, whose sufferings and death were similarly represented in Egypt each recurring spring ; also of Adonis, of Dionysus, of Mithras, and of sundry vegetation gods who were annually slain to revive vegetation and to secure the life of the initiate in the next world. The slain god who was thus worshipped by a secret sect in Jerusalem is a composite myth, made up of elements borrowed from all kinds of pagan cults. There is scarcely an incident or an action or a figure in the Gospel narratives of the Passion to which Mr. Robertson is not able to find something which looks like a parallel in one or other of the many mythologies from which the supposed "Jesuist" sect took its ideas. For it must be remembered that according to this theory the Christian Gospels are simply a transcript of the ritual drama annually performed by this secret sect in Jerusalem. A biography of the Founder of the cult was thought necessary ; and the Christian Gospels are the biography in question."

Coming to speak of Buddha, the Swami dwelt on his wonderful life-story showing that he was the greatest man that ever lived. "He never drew a breath for himself," he exclaimed. "Above all, he never claimed worship. He said, 'Buddha is not a man, but a state. I have found the door. Enter, all of you !' "

Drifting down the river, and enjoying the most lovely scenery around, the party came the next day to the ruins of the two great temples of Avantipur, and on the twenty-second went on to Islamabad after visiting the temple of Bijbehara on the previous day. The Swami was accustomed in these days to take long walks in the morning with one or more of his pupils, across the fields and along the banks of the Jhelum. And his talks during these walks were as exhilarating as the mountain breeze they passed through, and as soul-enthralling as the masses of wild blossoms on the Cherry, Apple and Pear trees all around them were charming to the eye. A few fragments of these talks recorded by the Sister Nivedita may be jotted down here with advantage.

Koviloor Digital Library

Discoursing on the sense of sin as current among the Egyptian, Semitic and Aryan races, he pointed out that though it appears in the Vedas it quickly passes out, while the Egyptians and Semites cling to it as one of the main planks of their religious ideas. The Devil, according to the Vedic conception, is Lord of Anger, and with the Buddhists he becomes Mara, the Lord of Lust. "But while Satan is the Hamlet of the Bible, in the Hindu Scriptures the Lord of Anger never divides Creation. He always represents defilement, never Duality. With Zoroaster, who was a reformer of some old religion which must have been Vedantic, Ormuzd and Ahriman were not supreme, they were only manifestations of the Supreme. In India, Righteousness and Sin—*Vidyâ* and *Avidyâ*—have both to be transcended to reach the highest truth."

The talk would often drift to matters pertaining to his motherland and the future. In order to strengthen the national life, he said, we must reinforce the current of that life itself along the line of its own culture and ideals. As an instance, "Buddha preached renunciation and India heard. Yet within a thousand years she had reached her highest point of national prosperity. The national life in India has renunciation as its source. Its highest ideals are service and Mukti."

"No nation, not Greek or another, has ever carried patriotism so far as the Japanese. They don't talk, they act—give up all for country. There are noblemen now living in Japan who gave up their political privileges and powers to create the unity of the Empire. And not one traitor could be found in the Japanese War. Think of that !"

"The Sannyâsin who thinks of gold, to desire it, commits su icide."

"With the Hindus, marriage is not for individual happiness, but for the welfare of the nation and the caste."

"You are so morbid, you Westerns ! You worship Sorrow ! All through your country I found that. Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface : really, it is full of tragic intensity. Now, here, it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."

Koviloor Digital Library

"A leader is not made in one life. He has to be born for it. For the difficulty is not in organisation and making plans; the test, the real test, of a leader lies in holding widely different people together, along the line of their common sympathies. And this can only be done unconsciously, never by trying."

But there was another side. The Swami was not the philosopher or the teacher all the time. He could be gay as well as grave, full of fun, jokes and humourous stories,—a phenomenon which shocked the feelings of the divines and ecclesiastics when he was in the West. Some had even told him to his face, "Swami, you are a religious preacher. You should not give yourself up to laughter and frivolity like common folk. Such conduct does not befit you." But his reply was, "We are children of bliss and light! Why should we be sombre and morose?"

At Islamabad, during the evening hours, as the group sat round Swamiji on the grass in an apple orchard, he was found to be "engaged in the rarest of rare happenings"— a talk of a personal character. Picking up two pebbles in his hand he was saying, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*"—and the stones struck one another in his hand—"for I *have* touched the feet of God!" Then he went on telling them remarkable episodes of his *parivrajaka* life, for an hour or two. The talk came to an end abruptly, when a child whose hand was badly cut was brought to him by the villagers. He himself bathed the wound with water and applied the ash of a piece of calico to stop the bleeding. The child was quite consoled.

Next morning, the twenty-third, the entire party visited the ruins of Marttanda, and it was noted that the *dharmasâlâ* round the Temple was strangely *Gothic* in shape. The Swami was busy describing architectural points here.

On the twenty-fifth they journeyed on to Acchabal, having wandered on that road of exquisite beauty of scene, where one also sees the old palace and the gardens of

Koviloor Digital Library

Jehangir, to Vêrnag. It was at Acchabal that the Swami during an open-air meal suddenly announced to his companions his intention to go to Amarnath, in company with the two or three thousand pilgrims then *en route* for the Shrine. As a special privilege the Sister Nivedita was allowed to join him on the pilgrimage, so that she, as a future worker, might have a direct knowledge and insight into that time-honoured religious institution of his country. It was settled later, however, that his other European disciples would accompany the party as far as Pahlgam and wait there for the Swami's return from the pilgrimage. Accordingly, returning to the boats, the start was made next afternoon, July the twenty-sixth, for Bawan, the first stopping-place on the way to the sacred shrine of Amarnath.

Koviloor Digital Library

CX.

AT AMARNATH AND KSHIRBHAVANI : MYSTIC EXPERIENCES.

The procession of several thousands of pilgrims to the far-away Cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. It strikes one with wonderment to observe the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up in some valley with incredible rapidity at each halting-place, with its tents of various colours and of all shapes and sizes, with its bazaars, and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn, when the whole army of gay pilgrims are on the march once more for the day. Then again, the glow of countless cooking-fires, the ashen-clad Sadhus under the canopy of their large *gerrua* umbrellas pitched in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their *dhunis*, the Sannyâsins of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at night-fall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus,—all these and many other romantic sights and experiences of a pilgrimage which can be met with nowhere else outside of India, are the most impressive, and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion. Of the psychological aspect and significance of such pilgrimages done on foot for days and days much could be written. Suffice it to say, that it is one of those ancient institutions which have, above all, kept the fire of spirituality burning in the hearts of the people. One sees here the very soul of the Hindu nation laid bare in all its innate beauty and sweetness of faith and devotion.

Koviloor Digital Library

Taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the Swami in common with his fellow-disciples, had learnt to observe scrupulously all those customs and rules of conduct which had been consecrated by the faith of the millions from long-past ages. Thus while presiding over a *pujâ*, or religious service, or over the initiation ceremony of Sannyâs to a disciple, he would see to it that all the necessary materials and accessories were collected to their minutest details and made ready in a proper way, that the ceremony was conducted strictly in accordance with Vedic injunctions and utterances of *mantrams*, and so on. While making pilgrimages he would, similarly, do everything in the same devout way as the most simple-minded woman about him. He would bathe in the holy waters, offer flowers, fruits and sweets to the object of worship before breaking his fast, make obeisance prostrating himself to the ground, tell his beads, make *pradakshina* and the like. Thus the Master, as befits one who was ever mindful of the varying stages and tendencies of religious beliefs of those about him who looked up to him as their ideal, and who was always constructive in his methods and eager to guide them along their own line of growth, made himself, intuitively, one with the people before rising to his own greatest heights. This phase of his character, no doubt, made him a puzzle to many,—but by this, among others, expressive of his love for his brethren, and expressive also of the universal spirit of Hinduism, he was able to drive his principles home to the minds of the people with greater force of conviction. On the present occasion, therefore, the Western disciples found a sudden change in the Swami from the start. He was seen, imbued with the spirit of the pilgrimage, practising austerities full of devotion and ardour, eating one meal a day cooked in the orthodox fashion, seeking solitude and silence so far as was practicable, telling his beads and devoting more time to meditation in his tent.

Amongst the hundreds of monks the Swami's influence was supreme, though at first he encountered strong opposition from the orthodox among them, because of the presence of

Koviloor Digital Library

foreigners with him. When their tents were pitched too near the pilgrims' camp, the Sadhus raised a clamour demanding them to be removed further. The Swami treated their complaints with scorn, till a Nâgâ Sadhu came up to him and said meekly, "Swamiji, you *have* the power, but you ought not to manifest it!" The Swami understood, and had the tents removed at once. Curiously enough, from the next day they all made way for him, and his tent as well as that of the Sister Nivedita were placed at the head of the camp, in some commanding position. And throughout the rest of the journey, at every resting-place, the Swami's tent was besieged by scores of monks who carried on a lively conversation with him. Many of them could not understand his broad liberal views on religious subjects and his warmth of love and sympathy for Islam. The Mohammedan Tahsildar, the state-official in charge of the whole pilgrimage, and his subordinates were so charmed with the Swami that they attended his talks daily, and afterwards entreated him to accept them as his initiate disciples. Sister Nivedita also, by her amiable and congenial manners, soon became a general favourite with the pilgrims and received from them "endless touching little kindnesses."

Passing Bawan, noted for its holy springs, and Eismukkam, the Swami and the host of pilgrims reached Pahlgam, the village of the shepherds, and encamped at the foot of an arrow-shaped ravine beside the roaring torrents of the Lidar. Here they made a halt for a day to observe the *Ekâdashi* fast. Coming near Chandanawara, the next stage, the Swami insisted on his disciple to do on foot her first glacier, which proved to be a tremendous climb of several thousand feet. Extremely exhausted with making another steep climb, and finally scrambling up and down along irregular goat-paths at the edge of precipitous slopes, they pitched their tents at a place amongst the snow-peaks, at an altitude of 18,000 feet, much higher than the glacier itself. The whole of the following morning was a steady climb, till at last the source of the Lidar lay five hundred feet below, hushed in its icy

Koviloor Digital Library

cradle. Next day, crossing frost-bound peaks and glaciers the procession came down to Pantajharni, the place of the five streams. In each of these the pilgrims were required to make ablutions, passing from one stream to another in wet clothes, in spite of the intense cold. Careful to observe every rite of the pilgrimage, Swamiji faithfully fulfilled the law on the present occasion, cleverly contriving to escape observation of his spiritual daughter.

On the second of August, the Day of Amarnath itself, the pilgrims after making a steep climb, and then a descent in which one false step would mean instant death, had to walk along the glacier mile after mile till they reached a flowing stream, in which they had to bathe before entering the sacred precincts of the Cave after another stiff ascent. The Swami who had fallen behind, perhaps intentionally, so as to be alone with his thoughts, came up and sent his waiting disciple on, with a word, and bathed in the river. He then reached the great Cave, in a very passion of the Shiva-consciousness, his whole frame shaking with emotion. The cave itself was "large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great Ice-Shiva, in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base." Then, his body covered with ashes, his face aflame with supreme devotion to Shiva, he entered the shrine itself, nude, except for a loin-cloth ; and kneeling in adoration he bowed low before the Lord. The awesome majesty of the whole atmosphere with the song of praise from a hundred throats resounding in the cave, and the shining purity of the great Ice-Lingam overpowered him. He almost swooned with emotion. A great mystical experience burst forth within him, of the full content of which he never spoke, beyond saying that Shiva Himself had appeared before him and that he had been granted the Grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, not to die until he himself should choose to throw off his mortal bonds. Aye, but was it not a corroboration of the words of his Divine Master regarding him,—"When he realises who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body !" Also it might be that, in

Koviloor Digital Library

his wrestling with the soul to keep itself from merging in the Absolute, "was defeated or fulfilled that presentiment which had haunted him from childhood, that he would meet with death in a Shiva-temple amongst the mountains." Indeed, so intense had been the shock of his mystical experience upon his physical frame that later on a doctor said, "Swamiji, it was almost death ! Your heart ought naturally to have stopped beating. Certainly it has undergone a permanent enlargement instead."

Never had the Swami visited a religious place with such spiritual exaltation as he experienced here. Meeting with his European disciple he told her afterwards that, "the very Lingam *was* the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring !" And he reiterated also, later on, in the circle of his Guru-bhâis and disciples, on his overwhelming vision there. "I can well imagine," he said dreamily, "how this Cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day, must have lost their flocks and wandered in here in search of them. What must have been their feeling as they found themselves unexpectedly before this unmelting Ice-Lingam, white like camphor, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over It for centuries, unseen of mortal eyes ! Then when they came home they whispered to the other shepherds in the valleys how they had suddenly come upon Mahâdeva !" Be that as it may, in the case of the Master himself, it was truly so, in that he entered the Cave and came face to face there with the Lord Himself ! And if Amarnath had been an awesome religious experience to him, more so than Amarnath was the Swami himself to his companion. So saturated had his personality become with the Presence of that God that for days thereafter he could speak of nothing but Shiva ; aye, for days previous Shiva had been the one idea in his mind. Shiva was all in all ; Shiva, the Eternal One, the Great Monk, enwrapt in meditation, aloof from all worldliness,—that was his own passionate ideal, and Amarnath was the climax.

Koviloor Digital Library

The journey down the mountain trails to Pahlgam was indeed as interesting as before. Amongst other sites the party passed the celebrated Lake of Death, into which, on one occasion, some forty pilgrims had been plunged by an avalanche, started, it is believed, by the volume of their song. After this place the Swami and some of the pilgrims shortened their journey by taking to a narrow sheep-track down the face of a steep cliff. At Pahlgam, there was joy when he again met his other European disciples, and the Swami could speak of nothing but Shiva and the Shrine and the Great Vision that had come upon him.

On the eighth of August, the party were again towed in their house-boats safely down to Srinagar, passing Islamabad on the way. At Srinagar the Swami remained until the thirtieth of September, during which time he had often had his boat taken away from the vicinity of his companions and remained for days in strictest solitude. His desire for self-introspection and intense meditation became more and more irresistible. For a few days, however, no uncommon mood was noticed in him and, as usual, he instructed his disciples with reference to India and his own ideas, dilating in particular upon "the *inclusiveness* of his conception of the country and its religions", of his own longing to make Hinduism active and *aggressive*, a missionary faith, having the gigantic strength of true orthodoxy, but barring its degeneracy into "don't-touchism", and of the necessity of commingling the highest meditative with the most active, practical life. "To be as deep as the ocean and as broad as the sky", he said quoting Sri Ramakrishna, "was the ideal." "Sri Ramakrishna", he continued, "was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane he was perfectly active and capable." At one time, before the trip to Amarnath, when someone had asked him, "Sire! What should we do when we see the strong, oppress the weak?" he had made reply, "Why, thrash the strong, of course!"

"Even forgiveness", he said on a similar occasion, "if weak and passive, is not true: fight is better. *Forgive* when

Koviloor Digital Library

you could bring legions of angels to an easy victory.....The world is a battlefield, fight your way out....." Another asked him, "Swamiji, ought one to seek an opportunity of death in defence of right, or ought one learn never to react ?" "I am for no reaction", replied the Swami slowly, and after a long pause added, "—for Sannyâsins. Self-defence for the householder !"

His conversations ranged from such subjects as the super-conscious life to Tod's "History of Rajasthan", of which he said, "Two-thirds of the national ideas now in Bengal have been gathered from this book.". He would dwell with a peculiar charm upon the many beautiful episodes in the lives of Meera Bai, "the queen who would not be queen", and the celebrated virgin Princess Krishna Kumari, and upon the Rajput heroes and "our national hero", Protap Singh. Speaking one day on the idea of the Gods worshipped in Hinduism he said, "These Gods are not merely symbols ! They are the forms that the Bhaktas have seen !" Then, it would be a remonstrance against miracle-working, and one day the Swami rebuked someone of the party whom he espied practising palmistry. Writes the Sister Nivedita :—

"It was a thing, he said, that everyone desired, yet all India despised and hated. Yes, he said, in reply to a little special pleading, even of character-reading he disapproved. 'To tell you the truth, I should have thought even your Incarnation more honest if He and His disciples had not performed miracles. Buddha unfrocked a monk for doing it.' Later, talking on the subject to which he had now transferred his attention, he spoke with horror of the display of the least of it as sure to bring a terrible reflex."

After their arrival in Kashmir, the Swami and his party were treated with the kindest consideration by the Maharajah in Srinagar ; and all during his stay various high officials visited the Swami's house-boat to receive religious instructions and converse with him upon important matters and other general topics. The Swami had gone to Kashmir, at the express invitation of the Maharajah, to choose a tract of land for the establishment of a monastery and Sanskrit college. There was a beautiful spot by the river-side, which

Koviloor Digital Library

was used as one of the camping grounds by Europeans. Upon this the choice of the Swami fell, and the Maharajah also expressed his willingness to make a gift of it to him for his educational scheme. Sometime after the return from Amarnath, the Western disciples, caught up with the Swami's prevailing mood in these days, were, anxious to practise meditation themselves in silence and solitude. Naturally, Swamiji encouraged them, and suggested that they might go and live in tents on that prospective Math ground, adding that it is auspicious, according to the Hindu idea, to have a new homestead blessed by women. And thus "a women's Math" was established there, as it were, and the Swami coming occasionally for a short visit would talk to them of his dream of realising the great idea of "by the people, for the people, as a joy to worker and to served."

It was a blow to Swamiji, therefore, when about the middle of September, he heard officially that it would be impracticable to secure lands for the erection of his proposed monastery and Sanskrit college in Kashmir, for his choice was twice vetoed on the list of agenda for Council by Sir Adalbert Talbot, then acting as Resident. Thus it could not even be discussed. Though this news temporarily depressed him, the Swami came to understand, after much reflection, that for various reasons, of all places Kashmir, or any Native State would be the last place for him to try the experiment of bringing his Indian followers into contact with European and *vice versa*. Then, too, he realised that Bengal was far more suitable for any educational propaganda for India at large than this distant State; and Calcutta, the metropolis, was the intellectual centre of the country. Besides, so far as his having a monastery in a cool climate was concerned, that project had been taken up in earnest by his disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and already they were on the lookout for a choice tract of land in the hills of Kumaon for this purpose. The Swami accepted the obstacles that had come in his path, therefore, as the Will of the Mother, and felt that after all it was the wisest.

Koviloor Digital Library

On September the twentieth Swamiji went to the Dahl Lake at the earnest request of the Consul-General of America and his wife to be their guest for a couple of days. When he returned he came up to the 'new Math', as they called it, and had his boat kept in its vicinity for a few days so that he could meet his disciples whenever he wished.

Following upon the pilgrimage to Amarnath, it seemed that, while previously his devotion had altogether centred upon Shiva, it now concentrated itself on the Mother. The songs of Ramprasad were constantly upon his lips. The strength which comes of the meditation on the Eternal One now shifted itself into the devotion of a child. And it was sweet and touching to see how he would worship, as Uma, the little four-year old daughter of his Mohammedan boatman. He told his disciples once during these days, that "wherever he turned he was conscious of the Presence of the Mother, as if She were a person in the room." He felt that it was She or his own Master "Whose hands were clasped upon my own and Who leads me as though I were a child." And now through the intensity of his spiritual personality, everything in the life of his comrades was associated with the thought of Mother, as it had been before with that of Shiva.

The strain of meditation became more and more intense and the Swami bitterly "complained of the malady of thought, which would consume a man, leaving him no time for sleep or rest, and would often become as insistent as a human voice." He was possessed of the Mother, and one day in the second week of September he had an experience, which can be compared only perhaps to that which he had had in the Dakshineswar temple-garden years ago, when at the bidding of Sri Ramakrishna he had gone to pray to the Mother to be relieved of the great strain that was upon him then.

He had now had his boat taken away to a solitary place, and the only person he allowed to visit him was a certain Brahmo doctor, who had become devotedly attached to him during his sojourn in Kashmir that summer, and who came regularly to enquire after his daily needs. This gentleman

Koviloor Digital Library

would often find him in these days lost in thought, and seeing him in that state would leave the boat quietly. Indeed, the Swami's brain seethed with the vision and the consciousness of the Mother, Whose Personality literally overshadowed him. It became in one sense the most ascetic torture and in another, the most ecstatic blessedness. His mind was at a pitch. In that tense state Revelation *must* come, or the mind burst.

One evening it came. He was overwhelmed by it. The whole world seemed to have fallen away. He had centred "his whole attention on the dark, the painful and the inscrutable, in the world, with the determination to reach, by this particular road, the One Behind Phenomena,"—for such was his conception of the Mother. His whole frame shook as if under a galvanic shock ; all the nervous centres of his body were athrill. It was as if something below the threshold of consciousness were firing itself forth. Was this what the Yogis speak of as the awakening of the *Kula-kundalini*? It was vision, tremendous vision, commingled with luminous knowledge, a world of poetic feeling and the ecstasy of the saint. Outside it was all stillness ; but within him a world-destroying tempest raged. His fingers fidgeted nervously in the hunt for a pen, and his hands hastily wrote the words, while his vision was intensest, of that which has since become recognised as one of his most famous poems called "Kali The Mother." In this poem one has the glimpse of the vision revealed in a terrific utterance. The tumult of the universe, the *sturm und dräng* of the cosmos he pictured as the Mad Joy of the Mother's Dance. Filled with this sublime consciousness he wrote to the last word ; the pen fell from his hand ; he himself dropped to the floor losing consciousness, his soul soaring into the highest forms of Bhâva-Samâdhi. The man who had swayed thousands upon thousands in the West, who had roused the Indian consciousness as it never was roused since the days of the Achâryas, lay as if dead in a swoon of ecstasy and awe!

Since returning from Amarnath the Swami was found constantly explaining Mother-worship to his disciples and

Koviloor Digital Library

calling upon Her, "Who is Herself, time, change and ceaseless energy". He would say, quoting the great Psalmist, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee", or "It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek after pain. There could be bliss in torture, too. Let us worship the Terror for Its Own sake." Or again it might be, "Learn to recognise the Mother as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow and annihilation as in that which makes for sweetness and joy!" Or he would exclaim, "Fools put a garland of flowers around Thy neck, O Mother, and then start back in terror and call Thee, the Merciful!" And then it would be, "Only by the worship of the Terrible, can the Terrible Itself be overcome and Immortality gained. Meditate on death! Meditate on death! Worship the Terrible, the Terrible! And the Mother Herself is Brahman! Even Her curse is blessing. The heart must become a cremation-ground; pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt into ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come!" Writes the Sister Nivedita :—

"And as he spoke, the underlying egoism of worship that is devoted to the *kind* God, to Providence, the consoling Divinity, without a heart for God in the earthquake, or God in the volcano, overwhelmed the listener. One saw that such worship was at bottom, as the Hindu calls it, merely 'shop-keeping,' and one realised the infinitely greater boldness and truth of the teaching that God manifests through evil *as well as* through good. One saw that the true attitude for the mind and will that are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact the determination, in the stern words of the Swami Vivekananda, 'to seek death not life, to hurl oneself upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible for evermore!'"

And often, now and later, as before, in moments of severe illness or pain, he would be heard to exclaim, "She is the organ! She is the pain! And She is the Giver of pain! Kali! Kali! Kali!" In all of his instructions in these days to his disciples with reference to the Mother he would say, "There must be no fear. No begging, but demanding,—*demanding* the Highest! The true devotees of the Mother are as strong as adamant and as fearless as lions. They

Koviloor Digital Library

would not be the least upset if the whole universe suddenly crumbles into dust at their feet! *Make* Her listen to you. None of that *cringing* to Mother! Remember! She is all-powerful; She can make heroes even out of *stones*!"

In these days the Swami's mind was literally saturated with the Mother-idea. She was present, he would say, wherever there was no fear, wherever there was renunciation or self-forgetfulness, wherever there was the vision that "Everything which one touches is pain"; for, when the cup of life is bitterest, then, naturally the child-soul turns to Mother for relief and support. And in the meditation on the skull and cross-bones of the Western mystic, he would see a dim reflection of the universal aspect of Mother-worship. His idea of the Divine Motherhood was as poetic as it was impersonal,—It is the Power behind all manifestation. Sometimes he would say such beautiful things as, "The sunlight on Mount Kailash is Uma!" And the Sister Nivedita, recording the Swami's ideas almost verbatim has said, amongst other things, in her celebrated work, *Kali The Mother* :—

"...Her mass of black hair flows behind Her like the wind, or like time, 'the drift and passage of things'. But to the great third eye, even time is one, and that one, God. She is blue almost to blackness, like a mighty shadow, and bare, like the dread realities of life and death. But for Him (Her consort Shiva) there is no shadow. Deep into the heart of the Most Terrible He looks unshrinking, and in the ecstasy of recognition He calls Her, *Mother!* So shall ever be the union of the soul with God!..."

Such was the vision of the Swami Vivekananda concerning the Mother, and such the illumination, through his perspective, of his European disciples, as well. The idea of the Mother inseparably connected with that of Her consort Shiva, as put forth by the Swami and his great Master was, undoubtedly, the highest conception of a Personal God ever approached by the spiritual intuition of man, and who can say that in this age of materialism, the need of the Shiva-Kali idea as a form of meditation was not imperative?

Following upon the experience related above, the Swami retired abruptly on the thirtieth of September to the

Koviloor Digital Library

Coloured Springs of Kshir-Bhavani, again leaving strict injunctions that no one was to follow him. It was not until October the sixth that he returned. Before this famous Shrine of the Mother he daily performed *Homa* and worshipped Her with the offerings of *kshira*, or thickened milk, made from one maund of milk, and rice and almonds, and told his beads in the same way as the humblest pilgrim. And, indeed, as a special Sâdhanâ, he worshipped every morning a Brâhman Pandit's little daughter as Uma Kumari, the Divine Virgin. Here also, he gave himself up to practising terrible austerities. It seemed as if he would tear off all the veils that had ever come upon his soul through years of work and relative thought and again be before the Divine Mother as the Child. Even though Her caresses might prove pain to the body, they would likewise prove illumination and freedom for the soul. All thought of Leader, Worker, or Teacher had fallen off. He was now only the monk, in all the nakedness of pure Sannyâs.

When he returned to Srinagar he appeared before his companions a transfigured presence, with an atmosphere of highest holiness. He entered the door of their house-boat, his hands raised in benediction; then he placed upon the heads of each of his disciples some marigolds which he had offered to the Mother. "No more 'Hari Om!' It is all 'Mother' now!" he said, sitting down. "All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only 'Mother! Mother!' I have been very wrong. Mother said to Me, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter My temples, and defile My Images! What is that to you? Do *you* protect Me? Or do *I* protect you?' So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child!" One day he had been pondering over the ruins and the desecration of the temple wrought by the vandalism of the Mohammedan invaders. Distressed at heart he was thinking, "How could the people have borne with such sacrilege perpetrated before their eyes without offering strenuous resistance! If I were then here I would never have allowed such things. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother." It was then that he had heard the voice of the Mother speaking as above.

Koviloor Digital Library

The disciples sat silent, awe-inspired. They could not speak, "so tense was the spot with something that stilled thoughts." "I may not tell you more now," he said addressing his disciples before leaving, "It is not in order. But spiritually, *spiritually*, I was not bound down !"

Though again with his disciples, they saw little of him. The monk's mood was upon him, and for hours he would walk beside the river in the secluded woods, absorbed within himself, so much so that he would not even notice the appearance of his companions on the roof of their house-boat. One day he appeared before them with shaven head, dressed as the simplest Sannyâsin, and with a look of unapproachable austerity on his face. Quoting from his own poem, "Kali The Mother", he interrupted himself to say, "It all came true, every word of it ; and I have proved it, *for I have hugged the Form of Death !*" And here and there, the details of that austerity and fasting and self-renunciation he had practised at Kshir-Bhavani, and the Revelations that had come to him were made evident in his remarks. In his meditation on the Terrible in the dark hours of the nights at Kshir-Bhavani, there were other visions which he had in the course of his Sâdhanâs, when he was alone in the dark, living in a dingy cloister by the shrine of Kshira-Bhavani, the contents of which he confided to one or two of his Gurubhâis, and which are too sacred to reveal to the public. It seemed, indeed, as if the Swami's whole nature had reacted upon itself in those moments in its final struggle to rise above all *mâyic* or worldly *Samskâras*.

At this same shrine, in the course of worship one day, Swamiji brooding with pain on the dilapidated condition of the temple, wished in his heart that he were able to build a new one there in its place as he did wish to build his monasteries elsewhere, especially the temple to Sri Ramakrishna in the new Math at Belur. Lo ! he was startled out of his reveries by the voice of the Mother Herself saying to him, "My child ! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot." "Since I heard

Koviloor Digital Library

that Divine Voice," said Swamiji to a disciple much later, when he was in Calcutta, "I have ceased cherishing any more such resolution. Let these things be as Mother wills!"

During these days also, the Swami had an experience of a disquieting nature. Alluding to it he spoke later as "a crisis in his life." A disciple of a Mohammedan *Fakir* used to come to him occasionally, attracted by his personality. Hearing from him one day that he was suffering from fever and severe headache, Swamiji out of compassion touched him on the head with his fingers and the man's ailments left him presently, to his great surprise. Since then he became very much devoted to Swamiji, and came to him oftener than before. But the Guru of the man, the *Fakir*, knowing of this, became bitterly jealous of Swamiji, and afraid lest his disciple forsake him and go over to the other, spoke ill of Swamiji. and warned his disciple not to see him Finding that his words had no effect, the man was irate and abused Swamiji to his disciple. And actuated by a spirit of revenge, as also, perhaps, to convince him of his greater psychic power, threatened to practise some charms against Swamiji and prophesied that he would vomit and will feel giddy in the head before he left Kashmir. This actually happened to Swamiji, precipitating him into perplexities of mind and making him furious with righteous wrath, not towards his supposed evil-wisher, but towards himself and his Master. He thought: "What good is Sri Ramakrishna to me?—What good are all my Realisations and preaching of Vedanta and the omnipotence of the Soul within, when I myself could not save myself from the diabolical powers of a black magician?" This experience exercised his mind so much so that even when he arrived in Calcutta three weeks hence, he was found to be greatly agitated; and he made no secret of his feelings before the Holy Mother, the virgin-widow of Sri Ramakrishna, who happened to be there at the time.

But in his *abhimân* against his Beloved, the Swami had forgotten, or it might be that he found consolation with the thought that,—whatever might be the psychological

Koviloor Digital Library

explanation of evil overpowering good,—even Shankaracharya who is regarded as Shankara Himself, had been a victim to the infernal machination of a malicious Tantric, who had transmitted an incurable disease to him, leading to his death. And did not the Swami hear from his own Master of a personal experience similar to his own, occurring after the former had attained perfection in Yoga? In those days when Sri Ramakrishna after four years of intense Sâdhanâs had constant vision of the Divine Mother, he was cursed one day for some plain-speaking, which he did with the best of intentions, to Haladhari, a Sâdhaka and Pandit, and an elder cousin of his. Wounded in his pride, Haladhari got angry and said, "As you being a younger brother dare speak thus to me, blood will come out of your mouth!" And some days after, one night, blood as dark and thick as could be imagined, came out gushing from his throat in profusion. The Master got alarmed. Fortunately an unknown Sadhu, who proved to be a great Yogi himself, had come to the temple-garden that very day. Hearing of the occurrence he came to see him, and after examining minutely the blood and the locality from which it was flowing he gave him courage by saying, "There is no fear, Mahatmaji. I can see, you must have practised an intense form of Yoga, by which the *Sushumna* canal in your body was opened and blood was coursing to your head, but on the way it made an outlet for itself, thus saving your life. If it had run up into your head, it would have brought on Jada-Samadhi merging your soul in the Absolute, from which you could not have returned to earthly plane. It seems, the Lord has some special mission of His to fulfil by you, and so He has spared your life."

Who would be so bold as to say that the Swami's case was not, in some way at least, identical with that of his Master, and that in both cases, the curse, by a strange coincidence with the spiritual development of the personalities concerned, was not turned into a blessing, in the fulfilment of a special working of Providence?

Koviloor Digital Library

Preparations were now made to go to the plains. The Swami spoke in a very casual way about the future. He had no plans ; all that he would wish for himself was the life of the monk, in silence and forgottenness. "'Swamiji' was dead and gone. Who was he that he should feel responsible for teaching the world ? It was all fuss and vanity. The .Mother had no need of him, but only he of Her. Even work, when one had seen this, was nothing but illusion." An overmastering love enveloped him. He believed now in nothing but love, love, Love,—love so intense that, it would be impossible for even the vilest enemies to resist it. To continue, in the words of the Sister Nivedita :—

".....I can give no idea of the *vastness* of which all this was utter. ance,—as if no blow, to any in the world, could pass and leave our Master's heart untouched ; as if no pain, even to that of death, could elicit anything but love and blessing.

"He told us the story of Vasishtha and Viswamitra ; of Vasishtha's hundred descendants slain ; and the sage left alone, landless and helpless, to live out his life. Then he pictured the hut standing in the moonlight, amongst the trees, and Vasishtha and his wife within. He is poring intently over some precious page, written by his great rival, when she draws near and hangs over him for a moment, saying, 'Look, how bright is the moon to-night !' And he, without looking up,—'But ten thousand times brighter, my love, is the intellect of Viswamitra !'

"All forgotten ! the deaths of his hundred children, his own wrongs, and his sufferings, and his heart lost in admiration of the genius of his foe ! Such, said the Swami, should be our love also, like that of Vasishtha for Viswamitra, without the slightest tinge of personal memory."

The whole party came back to Baramulla on October the eleventh, and left for Lahore on the next day. The European disciples had decided to accompany the Swami thither, and wait there for some days, and then visit some of the principal cities of Northern India, such as, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, &c., for sight-seeing, with the Swami Saradananda, who had left Calcutta on the twenty-seventh of September to meet the Swami in Kashmir. The Swami left Kashmir with many memories, but uppermost in his mind was the Vision of the Mother and of Her consort, Shiva Mahadeva.

Koviloor Digital Library

The river-trip to Baramulla was noticeable only for the extreme silence of the Swami, who preferred to be almost entirely by himself, and who took in the morning and evening long walks along the riverside alone. He looked so ill and worn out that his companions feared an imminent break-down. Writes his disciple, Nivedita :—

"The physical ebb of the great experience through which he had just passed—for even suffering becomes impossible, when a given point of weariness is reached ; and similarly, the body refuses to harbour a certain intensity of the spiritual life for an indefinite period !—was leaving him, doubtless, more exhausted, than he himself suspected. All this contributed, one imagines, to a feeling that none of us knew for how long a time we might now be parting....."

Koviloor Digital Library

CXI.

CONSECRATION OF THE MATH: ITS SCOPE AND IDEALS.

The Swami left Lahore attended by the Swami Sadananda, who had hurried down thither from Almora receiving a wire from him, and arrived at the monastery at Belur on October the eighteenth. His unexpected appearance sent his brother-monks and disciples into a fit of rapture, but alas, a few moments later all their joy gave place to pain when they marked his face pale as death and saw how ill he was. Though his sudden departure from Kashmir was not communicated to them, news of the Swami often reached the monastery through the letters of the Sister Nivedita describing his movements, and these were read at special class meetings held for the purpose.

Among the several additions of members that had occurred at the monastery both before and during the absence of the Leader, Khogendra and Haripada, who later became the Swami's disciples known as the Swami Vimalananda and the Swami Bodhananda, respectively, and also those who are now known as the Swami Kalyanananda and the Swami Somananda, had enlisted themselves as Brahmachâri members, the former two when the Math was at Alumbazar and the latter at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house. These, with the other disciples, had followed regular courses of study on the Vedas, the Hindu theologies and even the material sciences. Of course, paramount were the worship of the Master, and hours of meditation and devotion.

Notwithstanding his failing health the Swami resumed his old life with the monks. Hours were spent in religious converse, question-classes were held, the Scriptures were read and commented upon, and he again took up seriously the work of training the members. He ordained various regu-

Koviloor Digital Library

lations and monastic disciplines and instituted spiritual and intellectual work for specific hours of the day. On the very day of his arrival he thrilled every one present by reading, with his characteristic eloquence and depth of feeling, the three poems composed by him in Kashmir. Every word of the poems, as uttered by him, seemed ensouled with his own Realisations. On the nineteenth and the twentieth he performed the Homa ceremony. The next three days there were appropriate services and gatherings of the lay-disciples of the Order and feasting and rejoicing at the Math on the occasion of the great religious festival of Durgâ Pujâ. On the twenty-fourth the Swami Turiyananda arrived from Almora. Everything was now becoming centred, as it were, in the monastery, and through the devotional fervour at all times manifest, the light of the Baranagore days shone forth anew.

From the first of November the Swami's movements alternated between the monastery and the residence of Balaram Babu in Baghbazar. On the fifth of this month he received at the Math, Mr. Rishibar Mukherjee, the Chief Justice and Mr. Nilambar Mukherjee, the Prime-minister, of Kashmir. On following day he had as his guests at the monastery the European disciples who had accompanied him to Kashmir and had now returned to Calcutta, after a tour of the historic cities in Northern India.

On the twelfth of November, the day of the *Kâli pujâ*, the Holy Mother herself, accompanied by a number of women devotees, visited the site of the permanent abode of the Ramakrishna Order. The monks were all present and had made elaborate arrangements for *pujâ* and *bhoga* on the occasion. The Thakoor worshipped in the Math had been taken by them thither. The Holy Mother had brought also her own Image of the Master, and with special worship she blessed the place.

In the afternoon she with her party, as also Swamiji with the Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda, returned to Calcutta to perform, that very evening, the opening ceremony of the Sister Nivedita's Girls' School in Baghbazar, at the re-

Koviloor Digital Library

quest of Swamiji. At the end of the ceremony of worship the Holy Mother "prayed that the blessing of the Great Mother of the Universe might be upon the school and the girls it should train be ideal girls." And of this blessing the Sister Nivedita herself has written,—"I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessing, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future."

From the time of his very first meeting with the Sister Nivedita, the Swami had discussed with her at great length his views with regard to Indian women in general, and his plans of education of Hindu girls in particular. Of course, he had spoken of these to numerous persons, but as the Sister Nivedita had come to India expressly to be of service to Indian womanhood and as she was a well-known educationist in England, he had communicated to her, in an especial sense, his definite plans for the amelioration of the women of his people. It had been understood, both during her stay in Calcutta and Almora, and later during her wanderings with the Swami in Kashmir, that at the first opportunity, she would open a girls' school in Calcutta, so as by this experiment "to make some educational discovery, which would be qualitatively true and universally applicable to the work of the modern education of Indian women" at large. With this in mind, shortly after the Swami's return to Calcutta, she arrived there after touring in Northern India with the group of her European companions. With great spiritual heroism she decided to forget that she was European and came to the residence of the Holy Mother, there to make her abode. She was gladly welcomed by her. A separate house near by was, however, rented for her, but she spent her nights with the lady-*bhaktas* of the Holy Mother's household. The Swami, when in Calcutta, exchanged frequent visits with her, and on these occasions he gave her additional insight into the Indian consciousness and into the nature of work she had assumed ; and this insight she has masterfully embodied in her celebrated work, "The Web of Indian Life." At the Holy Mother's residence she came into

Koviloor Digital Library

touch with several of the finest orthodox ladies, women who were well-versed in the culture of the epics, the dramas and the religion of Hinduism, and whose lives were a constant reminder to their European guest of the values and realisations of Hinduism. This was of especial advantage to her, and she herself lived the life of a Hindu Brahmachârini and soon became altogether Hinduised.

The commencement of the Sister Nivedita's work is here mentioned because it occurred at this very time; then, too, it enlisted the attention of the Swami at this time in particular. Of him, the Sister herself had said, "He is a born educator", and this was proved on those many visits in the way of instruction which he paid to her. The Swami had given her all liberty in the elucidation of her ideas. She should be free from collaborators, if she so chose. And, above all, if she so wished, she might give her work "a definite religious colour" and, if thought wise, to make it even sectarian. But he added knowingly: "You wish through a sect to rise beyond all sects." Eventually it should include all sects, not only within, but even without the pale of Hinduism. And the Swami had once told her, "If amidst their new tasks the Indian women of the future would only remember now and then to say, 'Shiva! Shiva!' it would be sufficient worship." And giving to the Sister herself his idea of what a worker in the cause of womanhood should be, he had once said, "Yes, you have faith, but you have not that burning enthusiasm that you need! You want to be consumed energy." Then he blessed her with saying, "Shiva! Shiva!" and this blessing had its results. And in no better language can the Sister Nivedita's service to India be described than to say, "She became a consuming energy in its cause." But so far as the ideas themselves are concerned, a general description will be given in the chapter on Indian Womanhood.

Though the ceremony of consecration of the Ramakrishna Math took place on December the ninth, the consecration of the newly-bought Math grounds had been celebrated long ago, in one of the early days of March, 1898 A. D.

Koviloor Digital Library

On this latter occasion, the Swami himself performed all the sacred rites, supported by his *gurubhâis* and disciples, on the new monastery grounds. The proceedings, throughout, were most impressive and inspiring. After making ablutions in the Ganges on the morning of that day, the Swami put on a new *gerrua* robe, entered the chapel and sat in meditation on the worshipper's seat. He then worshipped the relics of Sri Ramakrishna with great veneration, burying them with heaps of flowers and Vilva leaves, and became again absorbed in deep meditation. His august presence bathed in the lustre of spiritual fire, seemed to illumine the whole worship-hall with an indescribable charm. The Swami Premananda and the other monks of the Brotherhood stood at the door entranced, as it were, with a vision of transcendent holiness.

After worship a procession was formed of the whole Brotherhood, wending its way by the bank of the Ganges from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to the site of the new monastery, led by Swamiji who carried on his right shoulder the hallowed urn containing the earthly remains of Sri Ramakrishna. The solemn sound of the blowing of conch-shells and the beating of gongs resounded across the river. On the way Swamiji addressing a disciple said, "The Lord once told me, 'I will go and live wheresoever it shall become your pleasure to take me, carrying me on your shoulder—be it under a tree or in the humblest cottage !' With faith in that gracious promise I myself am now carrying Him to the site of our future Math. Know for certain, my boy, that so long as His name shall inspire His followers with His ideals of purity, holiness and loving spirit of charity to all men, even so long shall He, the Lord, sanctify the place with His hallowed Presence." When the Math was in sight, the Swami spoke upon the glorious mission which he felt the new monastery should perform. He said : "It should be a centre in which would be recognised and practised a grand harmony of all creeds and faiths as seen in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and only life-giving ideas of religion in its universal aspect would be preached. And from this centre of universal toleration

Koviloor Digital Library

would go forth the shining message of good-will and peace and harmony deluging the whole world." He warned them of the danger of sects arising within its fold in the lapse of time.

Laying the sacred urn on the special *âsana* spread on the Math grounds, Swamiji and with him all the others fervently prostrated themselves in salutation before it. After doing the *puja* with solemn rites he lit the sacrificial fire and performed Virajâ Homa, at which only the Sannyâsins of the Order could be present. Having himself cooked the *pâyasânnam*, or sweetened milk-rice, with the help of his Sannyâsin brethren, he offered it to the Thakoor. The consecration ceremony of worship being now ended, Swamiji feelingly addressed the congregation with the following words : "Do you all, my Brothers, pray to the Lord with all your heart and soul, that He, the Divine Incarnation of the age, may bless this place with His hallowed Presence ever and for ever, and may He make it a unique centre, a *punya-kshetra*, of harmony of all the different religions and sects, for the good of the Many, for the happiness of the Many !" All present spontaneously responded to the call by joining in the prayer to the Lord to that effect, with folded palms. Then the return procession formed, Sarat Chandra, the Swami's disciple, carrying, at the injunction of his guru, the sacred urn on his head.

This particular day was a "red letter day" in the history of the Ramakrishna Mission. The very atmosphere vibrated with spirituality. All sensed the Presence of the Master Himself. The Swami was jubilant, aye, ecstatic. Now he felt he had accomplished a supreme task,—namely, that of finding a permanent place and sufficient means for building a temple for the Master with a monastery for his *gurubhâis* and their future generations, as the head-quarters of the Order, for the perpetuation and propagation of his Master's teachings. He himself said : "By the Will of the Lord is established to-day His *Dharmakshetra*. To-day I feel free from the weight of the responsibility which I have carried with me for these twelve long years. And now a

Koviloor Digital Library

vision comes to my mind! This Math shall become a great centre of learning and Sâdhanâ. Pious householders will erect houses for themselves on the grounds in the vicinity, round this future religious university centre and live there, and the Sannyâsins will be in the central position in the midst of them all. And there, to the south, the followers of the Lord from England and America will come and make their abode !" Turning to a disciple, he asked triumphantly, "What do you say to this ?" The disciple having reverently expressed his doubt if this "most excellent piece of fancy" would ever be materialised, the Swami cried out, "Fancy, do you say ! Hear me, O, you of little faith ! Time will fulfil all my expectations. I am now only laying the foundation, as it were. Great things will come later on. I will do my share of the task ; and I shall instil into you all various ideas which you will in the future have to work out ! The highest principles and ideals of religion have not only to be studied and comprehended, but brought to the practical field of life. Do you understand ?"

A few days later, the disciple had the privilege of hearing from his mouth some of these ideas about the scope and ideals of the Math, and the regulations and disciplines which the Swami would wish to be observed there in the future. These have been recorded by the disciple from his diary in the "Book of Dialogues, Part I," from which the following extracts will be found most suggestive and illuminating, as they give an outline of the Swami's schemes of National education and of philanthropic work for his own country. Walking to and fro on the grounds of the new Math he said in a prophetic vein, pointing to the old cottage :—

There will be the place for the Sadhus to live in. This Math will be the central institution for the practice of religion and the culture of knowledge. The spiritual force emanating from here will permeate the whole world, turning the currents of men's activities and aspirations into new channels. From here will issue forth ideals harmonising Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga and work. Time will come when by the mere will of the Sannyâsins of this Math life will vibrate into the deadened souls of men. All these visions are rising before me.

Koviloor Digital Library

On that land to the south will be the Temple of Learning, modelled after the manner of our ancient *Tôls*. In it will be taught Grammar, Philosophy, Arts, Science, Literature, Rhetoric, Hindu Codes of Law and Scriptures, and English. There the young Brahmachârins will live and study the Shâstras. The Math will support them with food and clothing &c. After five years' training these Brahmachârins will be at liberty to return to their homes and lead the householder's life, or, if they prefer, they may take the vow of Sannyâsa with the sanction of the Superiors of the Math. If any of these Brahmachârins are found disorderly or of bad character, they should be expelled. Here boys will be taught irrespective of caste and creed. But those who will like to observe the orthodox rites of their respective castes and creeds, will have to themselves arrange for the cooking of their food and so forth. They should only attend the classes in common with the rest. The authorities will keep a strict watch on their character too. No one will be entitled for admission into the monastic order who has not received his training there. Thus, in course of time, the Math work will be conducted wholly with a personnel drawn from them.

Disciple : Then, Sir, you mean to re-introduce the old Gurukula system in the country ?

Swamiji : Why, assuredly, yes ! There is no scope whatever in the modern system of education for the unfoldment of the Brahmavidyâ. The old institution of Brahmacharya must have to be established anew. But its foundation must be laid on a broad basis, and many changes and modifications suited to the needs of the times would have to be introduced into it, of which I shall tell you later on.

That plot of land adjoining ours in the south should be acquired in time. There will be the *Annasatra* or the charitable institution, of the Math, in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, where proper arrangements will be made for serving food to those who are really poor and needy, regarding them as forms of Narayana. The scope of its work will be regulated according to the funds at its disposal ; it may even be started with two or three people. Enthusiastic Brahmachârins will have to be trained to conduct this *Annasatra*, themselves finding means for its support, even by begging from door to door. The Math will not be allowed to lend any pecuniary aid to it. When the Brahmachârins have completed their five years' training in this department of Service in that way, then only they will have the right of admission into the Temple of Learning branch of the monastery. Thus after ten years of training in all, they will be entitled to enter the Sannyâsa Ashrama being duly initiated by the Math authorities,—of course if they are willing to do so, and if the latter find them suited for it. But the President of the Math may, in the case of some specially gifted Brahmachârin, waive aside

Koviloor Digital Library

this rule and give him Sannyâsa at any time he pleases. You see I have all these ideas in my head.

Disciple : Sir, what is the object of establishing these three separate branches in the Math ?

Swamiji : Don't you see. There should be, first, *Annadâna*, or giving of food and other necessaries of physical life ; next, *Vidyâdâna*, or imparting of intellectual knowledge ; and, last of all, *Jnânadâna*, or conferring of spiritual knowledge. The harmonising of these three aspects which conduce to the making of *Man*, must be the sole duty of the Math. Devoting themselves to the work of the *Annasatra* in the manner indicated, the idea of working for others by practical means and that of serving humanity in the spirit of worship, will be firmly implanted in the minds of the Brahmachârins. This will gradually purify their intellect, leading to the development of Sâtvic thoughts and aspirations. And such alone are capable of receiving and retaining the *aparâ* and the *parâ Vidyâ*, the secular and the supreme knowledge of Brahman, and following the life of renunciation.

* * * * * *

Disciple : Sir, Your words encourage me to learn something more of your ideas about the *Annasatras* and *Sevâshramas*.

Swamiji : There should be well-ventilated rooms in these Homes, in each of which two or three of the poor or the diseased would live. They should have comfortable bedding and clean clothes. There should be a doctor for them who would come and see them once or twice a week, or as often as convenient. The Sevâshrama will be a department of the *Annasatra*, in which the diseased will be nursed and well taken care of. In time as funds permit, a big kitchen will be built, and any number of hungry people will be fed at all times of the day to their hearts' content. None shall be refused under any circumstances. The *phen*, or the conjee strained off from the cooked rice, draining into the Ganges will turn its waters white ! Oh, how glad at heart shall I be when I shall see an *Annasatra* working in such a grand scale here !

Speaking thus Swamiji stood for a while gazing dreamily at the Ganges, as if fathoming into the future to see when that day would be in the coming. He broke his reverie by saying affectionately to the disciple :—

Who knows when the sleeping lion will be aroused in one or other of you ! If the Mother but kindles in the soul of any one of you a spark of Her Divine power, hundreds of such *Annasatras* will be opened all over the country ! Know this, that Jnana, Bhakti, Shakti *are already* in every living being. It is only the difference in the degree of their manifestation that makes one great or small. It is as if a curtain was drawn between us and that perfection. When that is removed, the

Koviloor Digital Library

whole of Nature is at your feet. Then, whatever you want, whatever you will for, will come to pass.

Continuing he said : If the Lord wills, this Math will be made into a Federation-ground of Universal religious ideas. Our Lord was the shining embodiment of the perfect harmony of all ideals. His throne will remain unshaken in the world of spirituality if we keep alive that ideal of harmony here. We should mould our lives in such a way that everyone from the Brâhmana down to the Chandâla, everyone of whatever faith or sect or stage of development, will find on coming here the ideal of his or her particular doctrine. The other day when we installed the Lord on the grounds of this Math, I saw as if His ideas emanating from here were flooding the whole universe with their radiance ! I am doing and shall do my best to elucidate His broad ideas to all people,—you all do the same also. What avails mere reading of Vedanta ? We have to exemplify the truth of the pure Advaita in practical life. This Advaita-vâda has so long been kept hidden in the forests and mountain-caves. It has been given to me to bring it out from seclusion and leave it in the very midst of family life and society to permeate them through and through. We shall sound the drum of Advaita in the heart of every home, in the fields and in the market-place, in the hills and in the plains ! Be my helpers, all of you. To work ! To work !

Disciple : But, Sir, my mind inclines to realise the Advaita rather in meditation. I do not like preaching and jumping about.

Swamiji : Why ! What is the use of remaining always stupefied in Jadasamâdhi ? Under the inspiration of Advaita why not sometimes dance, like Shiva, and sometimes remain immersed in superconsciousness ? Who enjoys a delicacy more,—he who eats it all by himself, or he who shares it with others ? Granted, that by realising the Atman in meditation you attain Mukti. What of that to the world ? We have to take the whole universe with us to Mukti ! We shall set a conflagration in *mahâ-mâyâ's* dominions ! Then only you will be established in the Eternal Truth. O, what can compare with that Bliss, immeasurable, "infinite as the skies" ! In that state you will be speechless, carried beyond yourself, by seeing your own self in every being that breathes, and in every atom of the universe. When you realise this, you cannot live in this world without treating everyone with exceeding love and compassion. This is the state of the realisation of the PRACTICAL VEDANTA. * * * *"

Be it noted that the great ceremony narrated above was the consecration of the place only. The grounds were as yet not in order ; the old buildings, previously used as the residential quarters of a boat-building centre, were undergoing

Koviloor Digital Library

considerable additions and alterations, and consequently, were not as yet ready for habitation. Under the Swami's orders the building-work had been begun in April 1898, and though it was pushed through with all haste, yet it was not fully completed till the beginning of the following year. An entire upper storey with a Verandah facing the Ganges had to be built, and at the same time, the building which contains the refectory of the monks and the chapel of Sri Ramakrishna was likewise constructed, under the expert supervision of a *bhakta* of Sri Ramakrishna, Hari Prasunno Chattopadhyaya, who had been a District Engineer and who has since become known as the Swami Vijnanananda and the President of the Ramakrishna Math in Allahabad. It was not until the second of January 1899, that the Math was finally removed from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to what is now called the Belur Math, although on the ninth of December, the installation ceremony of the Image of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated in the new monastery and Swamiji and several monks inhabited the new building even as early as that date.

Koviloor Digital Library

CXII.

AMONGST HIS OWN PEOPLE.

The Swami was by no means well in these days. He suffered often from hard breathing of an asthmatic nature. On the twenty-seventh of October he had his chest examined, at the request of some of the monks, by the well known specialist, Dr. R. L. Dutt, in consultation with a few other doctors and Kavirajes, and their opinion was in the nature of a warning. Then, too, a mood of deep solitude and meditation had come upon him, which was particularly noticeable immediately after his return from Kashmir. A clot of blood was found to have been formed in his left eye, possibly due to the pressure on the brain of tremendous concentration. The monks made efforts constantly to keep his mind from wandering, by its own intensity, into the deeper states of meditation. They would tell him stories to humour him, and try to draw him out by light talks, for they feared indeed that the Great and Final Meditation might come upon him at any time, and he might throw off the body like a disused garment. So abstracted was his mind from outward surroundings in these days, that oftentimes while asking simple questions he would suddenly revert to certain powerful thoughts he then had in mind, before he would pay heed to the answer. On one occasion the Swami Suddhananda had to repeat the description of an event ten or twelve times. Each time the Swami had asked the question and the disciple replied, but each time his interest in the subject had been lost in the deeper states of his being. But the reason for this especially intense concentrated mood was already known to the monks. Two or three days after his arrival from Kashmir, Sarat Chandra,—whom the Swami Brahmananda had instructed to go to the Swami and bring him down, if possible from his exalted state,—on entering the

Koviloor Digital Library

room, found him seated cross-legged, facing the East, his outer consciousness as if totally abstracted. He had hardly noticed the entrance of his visitor, but the latter, scrutinising his countenance, saw the clot of blood in his left eye. In alarm he asked the Swami about it, and he replied casually, "Oh, it is nothing! It might be due to my practising intense *tapasyâ* at Kshir-Bhavani." Thinking to divert his mind, the disciple begged him to recite the story of his pilgrimage to Amarnath. This aroused the Master and, in telling the tale, he suddenly exclaimed, speaking mystically. "Ever since my coming down from Amarnath, Shiva Himself has entered into my brain. He *will not* go!" After a little silence the Swami said, "On my way to Amarnath, I climbed up a specially steep ascent, unfrequented by any pilgrim. A sort of determination seized me to travel by that solitary path." He wanted to be altogether alone, free from all distractions. His whole mind was burning with Shiva! He forgot in those moments that he had a body. His personality was filled with a Great Consciousness. "Probably, my boy," continued the Swami, "the exertion has slightly shaken the system. The sensation of bitter cold there was like innumerable pin-pricks. I also went into the Cave with only a *kaupina*, having covered my body with ashes. At the time I felt neither heat nor cold. On coming out, however, I was benumbed!....." The disciple then questioned him as to the legend of the white pigeons which are said to make their abode in the Cave of Amarnath, and the sight of which on leaving the Shrine, legend holds, grants the fulfilment of any desire and heightens the merit of the pilgrimage accomplished. The Swami replied: "Yes! Yes! I know! I saw three or four white pigeons, but I could not be sure whether they belonged to the Cave or lived in the adjoining hills."

He spoke of the Divine Voice heard by him at the temple of Kshir-Bhavani. When the disciple sought to explain it away by suggesting that it might be a wholly subjective experience, being merely the echo of intensely powerful thoughts, proceeding from within and having no objective

Koviloor Digital Library

reality, he gravely remarked: "Whether it be from within one's self, or coming from some external agency, if you hear with your own ear, *exactly* as you are hearing my words, a voice without a form speaking to you from the skies, will you doubt its reality?"

Later on, the disciple pressed Swamiji to say if he had himself seen ghosts and spirits. He replied that the spirit of some relation of his had appeared to him now and then and sometimes brought to him news of far-off places. "But," he said, "on enquiry I found that her words did not always turn out true. Being in some place of pilgrimage I prayed for her emancipation, and since then I have not met that spirit again."

In these days Swamiji was obliged to stay mostly in Calcutta for treatment. But he would not allow his illness to prevent him from holding conversations with the numerous visitors who flocked to him for instruction. A certain disciple has thus written of the Swami's activity in these days:—

"A gathering was an everyday occurrence when Swamiji used to stay in Calcutta. From early in the morning till eight or nine at night, men would flock to him at every hour of the day. This naturally occasioned much irregularity in the time of his taking meals; so, his *gurubhâis* and friends desiring to put a stop to this state of things, strongly advised him not to receive visitors except at appointed hours. But the loving heart of Swamiji, ever ready to go to any length to help others, was so melted with compassion at the sight of such a thirst for religion in the people, that in spite of ill-health he did not comply with any request of the kind. His only reply was, 'They take so much trouble to come, walking all the way from their homes, and can I, sitting here, not speak a few words to them, merely for the consideration of risking my health a little?'"

Aye, in this he was so like his Master, Sri Ramakrishna!

The task of training his European disciples still went on. Mrs. Bull had taken a house in Bally, and there the Swami frequently went. He would intersperse his conversations with numerous stories from the epics and the Puranas, such as the doom of Parikshit, the sacrifice of Janamejaya, the stories of Savitri, of Nala and Damayanti, of Rama and Sita, of Dhruva

Koviloor Digital Library

and Prahlada, of the King Bharata, or of Vikramaditya. Or it might be stories of Sri Krishna or of Buddha that he narrated.

The Sister Nivedita and her school were a constant source of interest to the Swami, and he always endeavoured to make the life she had adopted easier and more spiritually intelligible. Sometimes he would ask her to have meals with him; and then he would prepare special dishes for her, and force her to take them in his presence, for he knew that she was then undergoing a rigorous austerity, living on a spare diet of milk and fruit and sleeping on a bare board, as the stricter nuns do in the convents of the West. And he would now and then beg her to cook delicate dishes for him, so that she herself should partake of them, and also that in this way he could break down to a great extent the iron barriers of orthodoxy among his own people with regard to her. And as for his own orthodox disciples, he was constantly breaking the bonds of meaningless customs and tradition of ages. He would sometimes test their loyalty to him by asking them to partake, as his *prasâd*, of some food concerning which orthodoxy cries, "Hands off!" As regards the Sister Nivedita, he made every effort to have her accepted by Hindu society, and was always ready to receive her in a discussion of ideas.

One day, in company with Swami Yogananda and Sarat Chandra, the Swami took the Sister to see the Calcutta Zoological Gardens. The superintendent, Rai Bahadur Ramabrahma Sanyal, hearing of his approaching visit, received him and his party cordially at the entrance, and took them round showing all the various animal-houses. The Swami was interested particularly in the feeding of the lions and the tigers, which was done before him at the order of the superintendent. Then the snakes interested him, and he entered into a long discussion on the history of the evolution of reptiles. Then it was the monkey-house, and here one calls to mind, how both in India and in the West, on seeing the almost-human members of this species, he would sometimes address them curiously, saying, "Well, how did you get into that body? What frightful Karma in the past has brought you here?"

Koviloor Digital Library

After partaking of a light refreshment arranged by Ramabrahma Babu, a long conversation ensued. The superintendent was a scientist in botany and zoology and held strongly to the Darwinian theory of Evolution. But the Swami though admitting Darwin's theory to be sound enough to a certain extent, assailed it with a greater theory, that of Patanjali's "the filling in of nature," which, he showed, offered the ultimate solution of the causes of evolution. He pointed out that Patanjali, unlike the Western philosophers, did not believe in 'Struggle for existence,' 'Survival of the fittest,' and 'Natural Selection' as causes in the evolution of one species into another. Howsoever true that may be the case in the lower order of nature, struggle and competition, instead of making for progress, the Swami held, retard the development of human character. Perfection, according to the ancient Hindu sages, is man's real nature, only prevented from manifestation by certain obstacles, and when these are removed from the Atman man's highest nature manifests itself fully. And it is through education and culture, through meditation and concentration, and, above all, through renunciation and sacrifice that the obstacles are removed. Thus, the competitive struggle of sex and food, he maintained, did not apply to the human plane, in its higher aspects, for the sages struggled to grow above and away from nature, to conquer animal instinct, to conquer even the sense of progress and merge the human in the Divine Nature.

The superintendent being much pleased with the talk exclaimed, "Swamiji, this is a wonderful theory, a wonderful theory! We need in India at the present day more men like you, versed at one and the same time in Eastern and Western philosophy, to point out to our educated community their one-sided views and correct their fallacies and confusions." The same evening, at the desire of the disciple and others he explained more clearly and elaborately his theory of evolution with special bearing to the needs of modern India, to a group of friends and visitors, at Balaram Babu's house, the conversation lasting until midnight.

Koviloor Digital Library

To relate it briefly, he said that Darwin's theory is applicable to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, but not to the human kingdom where rationality and knowledge are highly developed. In our saints and ideal men we find no trace of struggle whatever, and no tendency to rise higher or grow stronger by the destruction of others. There we find sacrifice instead. The more one can sacrifice the greater is he. The struggle of a rational man is with his internal nature. The more one succeeds in controlling his mind the greater is he. On being questioned, "Why then do you emphasise so much on the need of our physical improvement?"—the Master was roused like a whipped lion and thundered on the questioner by saying :—

"Are you men ? You are no better than animals, satisfied with eating, sleeping and propagating, and haunted by fear ! If you had not had in you a little rationality, you would have been turned into quadrupeds by this time ! Devoid of self-respect, you are full of jealousy among yourselves, and have made yourselves objects of contempt to the foreigners ! Throw aside your vain bragging, your theories and so forth, and reflect calmly on the doings and dealings of your everyday life. Because you are governed by animal nature, therefore I teach you to seek for success first in the struggle for existence, and to attend to the building up of your physique, so that you shall be able to wrestle all the better with your mind. The physically weak, I say again and again, are unfit for the realisation of the Self ! When once the mind is controlled and man is the master of his self, it does not matter whether the body remains strong or not, for then he is not dominated by it....."

Sleep rarely visited the Swami at this period. His disease kept his brain constantly active, and at frequent intervals in the night and in the early hours of the morning he was awake. He earnestly desired rest, however. An incident took place in this connection on the occasion of an eclipse of the sun in these days. He was at Balaram Babu's house, and had just taken his meal cooked by a disciple, who was shampooing his feet gently. Suddenly the blowing of conchshells and the ringing of bells were heard, signalising the eclipse. "Well", said the Swami, "the eclipse of the sun has begun. Let me have a nap." Later when the sky had become quite dark, he remarked, "Isn't it an eclipse, indeed !" Then

Koviloor Digital Library

he turned to sleep. Somewhile after, he arose and with sweet childlikeness spoke to the disciple attending him, "They say, a man is rewarded a hundredfold in what he may desire or do during the time of an eclipse. I thought that if I could sleep soundly just a little now, I should get good sleep in the future. But it was not to be. I have slept for about fifteen minutes only. The Divine Mother has not blessed this body with sound sleep."

This same disciple, Sarat Chandra, was in many respects especially favoured amongst the Swami's householder disciples. He had great hopes of him. He would say to him, "Come here often, my boy! How sanctified is the environment here with constant discussions on religion and with Sâdhanâ! Here you will find the company of holy men. And how bracing is the breeze on the bank of the Ganges! Will you find another place like this Math anywhere?" He even pressed him to join the monastic order, saying, "You were not born for the worldly life." One night the disciple solicited as a special favour the privilege, which was granted, of serving his Master at night. Being ill at the time, one or other of his monastic disciples used to attend on him in turn at night.

When the disciple was shampooing him, after he had retired, the Swami talked long on the nature of the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi and of his own experience of it in the Cossipore garden. He went on with a profound philosophical analysis of the subject, which led to the discussion on Brahman and Maya, and on the projection of the cosmos and Kalpas. In the course of the conversation he pointed out that from the superconscious state of the realisation of the Absolute as one's self, only *Avatâras* and world-teachers who are born to fulfil a special mission, can come back to the conscious plane in order to be of service to humanity, because of this one desire that they keep in their minds as the seed of *Karma* for their continuance in the body.

The night having advanced far, Swamiji told the disciple to sleep near him, and, as usual with himself, was awake for the

Koviloor Digital Library

most part except for short naps at intervals. At the last part of the night, the attendant who had had a sound sleep, awoke with a startled expression on his countenance and related to the Swami a dream he had just had, in which he saw himself worshipping with *Dhuturâ* flowers the Lord Shiva, whose Image gradually became merged in the personality of the Swami himself. The Swami said, "Do not speak of this to any one!" But the disciple after having bathed in the Ganges in the morning, insisted that he must make this dream come true, and begged the Swami to allow him to worship him. Being extremely averse that *puja* should ever be done to him, he would not consent to the request, and it was only after much pressure that he finally gave in.

Then the joyous disciple went in the neighbouring village in search of some *Dhuturâ* flowers, especially sacred to Shiva, but unfortunately none could be found. He became greatly disconsolate, and feared that his dream would not be realised. But to his great joy and surprise, he saw when returning, these very flowers in an out-of-the-way corner near the grounds of the Math. Happily, with all the necessaries of the ceremony collected, he went to the Swami, who was then sitting on a bench on the ground floor, facing the east. The Swami, on seeing him ready, sat motionless, absorbed in deep meditation, while the ceremony of worship went on. All were deeply impressed. The presence of Shiva Himself could not have been more inspiring. All the Sannyâsins of the Order, with the exception of the Swami Premananda, were present. He had gone to the bazaar and had not as yet returned. When the worship had been completed, the Swami turned to his beloved disciple, saying with much humour, "Now, my boy, what will you do if Premananda comes and hears that you have bathed my feet in the flower-tray used in the Thakur-Puja, and worshipped me with the utensils and materials taken from the chapel! He will be very angry, I am afraid!"

Hardly had these words escaped the Swami's lips, when the Swami Premananda appeared on the scene! The Swami

Koviloor Digital Library

told him of the matter, but the latter, far from being annoyed, spoke smilingly and with great depth of feeling: "What he has done is all right! Are you and Sri Ramakrishna different?" The Swami and the others were struck speechless at this unexpected reply in the way of confession of faith, and all present voiced in their hearts that which the Swami's *gurubhâi* had spoken.

The Swami, whether at the monastery or at Balaram Babu's house, or visiting the houses of many other devotees, was always most accessible. He would keep large audiences roaring with laughter over his many humorous stories. Then from laughter he would pass to deep instruction. But there were times, also, when he demanded solitude. During such moments all held aloof from him. His very countenance made him unapproachable, so filled was it with majesty and awe. But when he was free with his companions, none could be freer.

One of the events of these days, which pleased the Swami greatly, was the starting of the "Udbodhan," as the Bengalee fortnightly organ of the Order. The Swami Trigunatita volunteered to be its editor and manager, with a few Brahmachârins to help him. A Press was bought and the journal made its appearance on the fourteenth of January, 1899. Swamiji gave his directions about the lines on which the paper should be conducted. Nothing but *positive* ideas for the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of the race should find its place in the magazine. Instead of criticising and finding fault with the thoughts and aspirations of mankind embodied in literature, philosophy, poetry, arts, &c., of ancient and modern times, it should point out the way in which they might be made the more conducive to welfare and progress. It should never attack or seek to destroy anyone's faith. The highest doctrines of the Vedas and Vedanta should be presented to the people in the simplest way, so that by diffusing true culture and knowledge it should in time be able to raise the Chandâla to the status of the Brâhmana. It should stand for universal harmony as preached

Koviloor Digital Library

by Sri Ramakrishna, and scatter his ideals of love, purity and renunciation. The untiring zeal and perseverance, marked by wonderful self-denial, with which the Swami Trigunatita laboured for the success of the journal was something exemplary, and which, as Swamiji remarked, only an unselfish Sannyâsin was capable of.

It was on the sixteenth of December that the Swami announced to the monks that he would go for a short change to Baidyanath, and that later on, probably in the summer, he would again visit Europe and America. In the last days of his stay in Calcutta, previous to his going to that health-resort, large numbers of students hearing the news came to the monastery and also to the house of Balaram Babu in Baghbazar. Each day took on the appearance of a festival, and religious discourse went on continually. The Swami insisted constantly upon the necessity of performing works of service and of mercy, and roused in them the desire to consecrate their lives to *sevâ*.

On the nineteenth of December the Swami, attended by Horendra Nath, a Brahmachâri disciple, left for Baidyanath, where he was the guest of Babu Priyanath Mukherjee. Here he busied himself with private studies, in writing letters, and in taking much exercise, spending long hours in walking. He was much in solitude in these days, and removed from all public and business concerns his mind tended to the meditative state, however much he tried to idle away his time and force himself to take rest. On the whole, his health was bad, and here, for a time, his disease assumed complicated aspects. A virulent form of asthma set in, causing him severe pain. It was in one of these attacks that he was almost suffocated. And yet, when his face had turned purple with the effort at breathing, and his body was in convulsions, his one thought was that of the Absolute. Those who stood about him in that hour feared that the time had now come when he would leave the body. Supporting himself against a high pillow he was waiting he said, for his last breath to come out at any moment,

Koviloor Digital Library

when he marked arising, as it were, from the very depths of his being, the sonorous rhythm of the Vedic *mantram*, "*Sohum ! Sohum !*"—"I am He ! I am He !" And he heard ringing in his ears that Sloka of the Upanishad which reads : "There is only the One Brahman, the One Brahman, the Undying One ! There is no multiplicity in the universe. It is all the One Brahman, the One Brahman !"

It was at the house of the same gentleman, when once he was staying with the Swami Niranjanananda, that while out for a walk one day they found a man lying helpless on the roadside, in the cold of winter, suffering from acute dysentery. The poor man had only a rag on, and that too was soiled, and he was crying in pain. Seeing him Swamiji thought how he could help him. He was himself only a guest in a gentleman's house. How could he take such a patient there without his host's consent ? But he must do so, at any cost ! With the help of his *gurubhâi* he gently raised the sufferer to his feet, and both lending their support brought him slowly to the house. There, taking him into a room, they cleansed his body, put a cloth on him and fomented him with the help of a fire. The two *gurubhâis* nursed the sick man back to recovery before long. The kind host instead of being vexed at their bringing the man to his house, was lost in admiration at their conduct, and realised that the heart of Vivekananda was as great as his intellect !

During the Swami's absence from Calcutta, the Holy Mother visited the new monastery on December the twentieth and also the residence of Mrs. Ole Bull at Bally. On Christmas Day some of the monks went on the invitation of Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod to keep the festival. On the thirtieth these ladies were received by the monks at the monastery and then left for America. On January the second, 1899, the Math was finally removed entirely from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to its present quarters. The Sister Nivedita being invited by the monks gave a series of lessons to the Brahmachârins on various

Koviloor Digital Library

subjects, such as, Physiology, Botany, Arts and Painting, and on the Kindergarten system. The Swami was kept regularly informed of the movements of his *gurubhâis* and of the happenings of the monastery by letters, sent to him almost daily at Baidyanath.

Among the many epistles which he wrote during this period, that written to a certain Bengalee lady-disciple, is peculiarly interesting, giving as it does glimpses of his ideas on the origin of custom, widow-remarriage, liberty, and the psychology of the religious consciousness. It reads in part as follows:—

"Some very important questions have been raised in your letter.....

"(1) Rishi, Muni, or God—none has the power to force an institution on society. When the needs of the times press hard on it, society adopts certain customs for self-preservation. Rishis have only recorded those customs. As a man often resorts even to such means as are good for immediate self-protection, but which are very injurious in the future, similarly, society also not unfrequently saves itself for the time being, but these immediate means which contributed to its preservation turn out to be terrible in the long run.

"For example, take the prohibition of widow-marriage in our country. Don't think that Rishis or wicked men introduced the law pertaining to it. Notwithstanding the desire of men to keep women completely under their control, they never could succeed in introducing those laws without betaking themselves to the aid of a social necessity of the time. Of this custom two points should be specially observed :

"(a) Widow-marriage takes place among the lower classes.

"(b) Among the higher classes the number of women is greater than that of men.

"Now, if it be the rule to marry every girl, it is difficult enough to get one husband apiece : then how to get, by and by, two or three for each ? Therefore has society put one party under disadvantage, *i. e.*, it does not let her have a second husband, who has had one ; if it did, one maid would have to go without a husband. On the other hand, widow-marriage obtains in communities having a greater number of men than women, as in their case the objection stated above does not exist. It is becoming more and more difficult in the West, too, for unmarried girls to get husbands.

"Similar is the case with the caste system, and other social customs.

"So, if it be necessary to change any social custom, the *necessity* underlying it should be found out first of all, and by altering it the custom will die of itself. Otherwise, no good will be done by condemnation or praise.

Koviloor Digital Library

"(2) Now the question is, is it for the good of the public at large that social rules are framed, or society is formed? Many reply to this in the affirmative; some again may hold that it is not so Some men, being comparatively powerful, slowly bring all others under their control, and by stratagem, force, or adroitness, gain their own objects. If this be true, what can be the meaning of the statement, that there is danger in giving liberty to the ignorant? What, again, is the meaning of liberty?

"Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth etc., by you and me. but it means that it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing harm to others; and all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge. The second question is, those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, *i.e.*, full right to their body, wealth etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge like those of the rich and highly situated, they would be perverse,—do they say this for the good of the society, or blinded by their selfishness? In England, too, I have heard, 'Who will serve us, if the lower classes get education?'

"For the luxury of a handful of the rich let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset !!

"Who is society? The millions, or you, I and a few others of the upper classes?

"Again, even if the latter be true, what ground is there for our vanity that we lead others? Are we omniscient?

"'उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम्'—'Raise self by self'. Let each one work out one's own salvation. It is freedom in every way, *i. e.*, advance towards Mukti is the worthiest gain of man. To advance oneself towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supremest prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom."

* * * * * * *

This letter reveals another aspect of the universality of the Swami's personal culture. He was as much a sociologist as a religious teacher, and the definition which he gives, in the subsequent part of the letter (not quoted here), as to the conquest of desire in its relation to the perfection of personality marks him out to be, as well, a supreme psychologist. One pauses in reverence at the very intellect

Koviloor Digital Library

itself of the Swami, and one gathers, through such letters as these, some knowledge of that long period of intellectual austerity through which he had passed, before proceeding to America, in his intense study of human culture at large.

Among the many important letters that he had received from distinguished Indians during his last stay in Calcutta, the one from the great millionaire-philanthropist of Bombay, Sir Jamsetji N. Tata, is worth quoting here, even though the contents of the Swami's reply to this significant note are not in the hands of the Brotherhood :—

"Dear Swami Vivekananda,

"I trust you remember me as a fellow-traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

"I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of Research Institute of Science for India, of which you have doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by this spirit, where they should live with ordinary decency, and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic. I am of opinion that if such a crusade in favour of an asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science, and the good name of our common country ; and I know not who would make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekananda. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanising into life our ancient traditions in this respect ? Perhaps, you had better begin with a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter. I should cheerfully defray all the expenses of publication.

"With kind regards, I am, dear Swami,

"23rd. November, 1898. Yours faithfully,

"Esplanade House, Bombay. Jamsetji N. Tata."

The Swami remained at Baidyanath until the last days of January, 1899. On the third of February, he is seen once more in the companionship of his *gurubhâis* and disciples, to take up still further the task of training them for the firmer establishment of that Mission for which he had been born.

Koviloor Digital Library

CXIII.

THE TRAINING OF THE MONASTIC DISCIPLES.

The Swami, it must be remembered, was always busy, training consciously or unconsciously his Sannyâsin and Brahmachârin disciples in various ways. His very presence was, indeed, a training of the highest order by itself. Now, it would be that they should cook for him,—himself an excellent cook,—or execute his orders with exactitude and promptness. In the way of discipline he would be even most rigorous and exacting at times, so that they should learn the highest accuracy and, following the example of the great Pavhari Baba, put concentration even into the simplest acts of life. In this connection he once said, "He who knows how to even fill a *chillum* of tobacco properly, knows also how to meditate. And he who cannot cook well, cannot be a *pukkâ* Sannyâsin. Unless cooking is performed with a pure mind and concentration, the food fails to be *sâtvic*." Then again, he would train one or more disciples especially with a view to make them preachers. He would ask them to stand up and speak extempore before him and a group of Sannyâsins and householders. Sometimes, they would be shy, but he would insist, and tell them the story of how Sri Ramakrishna had once given him sound advice in the overcoming of all shyness. "Think," said Sri Ramakrishna, "the men before you as worms,—as the old proverb runs!" Once warmed up to the subject, the disciples would speak fluently, now on the Upanishads, now on Jnanam or Bhakti, or again on the necessity of Sraddhâ or on Renunciation, and so forth. He would always encourage them with cheers, or with saying "Well done!" at the end of a speech. Of the Swami Suddhananda, he said, "In time he will be an excellent speaker!"

A remarkable characteristic of the Swami was, that he made all who were about him feel great and equal to brave and dare anything. Success or failure on their part, would

Koviloor Digital Library

always elicit from him nothing but approbation and encouragement. He would judge his *gurubhâis* and his disciples, not by their actual achievements but by the spirit which actuated them. Enough, if they have dared and done their best! He would throw them into water, figuratively speaking, beyond their depth, and let them learn to swim with a life-and-death struggle. He had infinite faith in the possibilities of the human soul, and would inspirit it into them with a fire and an eloquence which were simply irresistible. He held them capable of being as equally inspired as he himself. He could see the atom of good in the disciple, only magnified as a mountain, and the mountain-high faults and failings in him as mere atoms of evil! With such a relationship as this prevailing, every word spoken or unspoken, every act or deed attempted or accomplished, every purpose grasped or uncomprehended, becomes charged with a power and a spirit, unerring in its mark, deathless in its vision, self-destroying and self-expanding!

There was a spirit in the Math in these days. The internal affairs had been perfectly organised by the Swami Saradananda, who had been called back from America by Swamiji especially for that purpose. Even though he knew that the former was just at that time in the height of his usefulness and possibilities there, he had thought it a greater and more urgent duty to organise the work of the headquarters and to train some of the younger members for the life of the preacher, by one who had made himself acquainted with Western needs and temperaments, and with Western methods of organisation. Besides, he knew that the work in America would not suffer so very much, since the Swami Abhedananda had been working there with untiring zeal for several months and pushing on the propaganda with surprising success. Since his arrival at the Math at the beginning of February 1898, the Swami Saradananda gave himself up to his task with remarkable alacrity and devotion, and everything went on like clock-work and with great enthusiasm. Question-classes and classes for the study of the Sanskrit language and of Eastern and

Koviloor Digital Library

Western philosophies were held regularly, conducted by him and by the Swamis Turiyananda and Nirmalananda, and everyone joined them in the hours of meditation in the temple. The business part of the Math was entrusted in the hands of the younger members to be managed by them. This was initiated at the instance of Swamiji, as he held that unless they were given independence and the right of self-government in their sphere, with responsibilities to shoulder, they would never learn to stand on their own feet and work with their whole heart for the cause. Thus, they formed themselves into a body, electing a superintendent from among themselves for every month, and he was responsible for carrying out efficiently all the daily duties and demands of the Math. On the principle of division of labour the superintendent assigned to every fellow-disciple his duties, had a reserve force to meet emergencies, and allowed some in turn to devote themselves solely to *tapasyâ* without being called to work. He had to look after every work being done properly and in time, everything being kept neat and clean and in its place, that the sick members were nursed, and so on. It was a delight to Swamiji to see, both before he left the Math in the early part of the year 1898, and after he returned in October, that the Math was organised in a way which was after his heart. He was now himself the central figure in everything, joining the disciples in their classes, directing them in their methods of work, and encouraging them with his words of praise and approval.

The Swami is seen in these days, pre-eminently, in his monastic perspective, constantly teaching and instructing his disciples on the ideals and practice of the monastic life. Gathering them together at any time that the mood came upon him, he would instruct them on the duties of their life, impress upon them the responsibilities of the great vow they had taken, and put before them its glories and possibilities. He would often say, "Brahmacharyam should be like a burning fire within the veins!" Or, "Remember, the ideal is the Freedom of the Soul and Service to all." Life of Sannyâsa

Koviloor Digital Library

meant to him, renunciation of the personal for the universal good, till the personal was merged in the Impersonal. He made ideals so intensely practical and living that one never thought of them as abstractions. To him nothing was impossible if one had faith in himself. He would point out that,—

"The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man, or a nation, loses faith in himself, death comes."

"Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work. Buddha gave Himself for the animals. Make yourselves fit agents to work. But it is God who works, not you. One man contains within him the whole universe. One particle of matter has all the energy of the universe at its back. In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart."

In one of these congregations of disciples the talk drifted on to the *Adhikârivâda*, or the doctrine of special caste rights and privileges, and Swamiji spoke in unmeasured terms against it and the evils that have resulted from it. There should be made no distinction, he said, in giving out the highest truths to one and all alike. His disciples should be bold enough to speak out the broad truths unequivocally and fearlessly without caring for *lokacharas* and *deshacharas*, the prevailing customs of the people and of the country.

"No compromise ! No whitewashing !" he cried out, "No covering of corpses with flowers !..... This attempt at compromise proceeds from arrant downright cowardice. Be Bold ! My children should be brave, above all. Not the least compromise on any account ! Preach the highest truths broadcast. Do not be afraid of losing your respect, or of causing unhappy friction. Rest assured that if you serve Truth in spite of temptations to forsake it, you will attain a heavenly strength, in the face of which men will quail to speak before you things which you do not believe to be true. People would be convinced of what you would say to them, if you can strictly serve Truth for fourteen years continually, without swerving from it. Thus you will confer the greatest blessing on the masses, unshackle their bondages and uplift the whole nation."

Or quoting Bhartrihari he would exclaim : "Let sages praise thee, or let the world blame. Let fortune itself come, or let poverty and rags stare thee in the face. Eat the herbs

Koviloor Digital Library

of the forest, one day, for food; and the next, share a banquet of fifty courses. Looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, follow thou on !"

Again and again he would say how a great monk only can be a great worker. "Only the unpassioned and unattached do most for the world" he would say. "Who can claim to be a greater worker than Buddha or Christ?" To the Swami's eyes there was no work which was secular. All work was sacred. All work was worship. "We must combine the practicality and the culture of the finest citizenship with the love of poverty, purity and thorough renunciation that characterise the true monk and man of God !"

In discussing the character of service which the monks should assume, he would speak of the feeding of the poor, relief in times of famine, nursing the sick, directing the sanitation of an infected town, founding orphanages and hospitals and centres of education and training,—all of which have since become integral elements in the work and life of the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. In the monastery itself, besides leading the spiritual and intellectual life, they were also to acquaint themselves, theoretically and practically, with gardening, the keeping of animals, music, and so forth. And he himself, setting an example, would often experiment with the sinking of a well or with such tasks as cooking and baking, and teach them how to sing hymns in chorus. Then he would insist on rowing and other physical exercises with the remark, "I want sappers and miners of the army of religion ! So, boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles ! For ascetics, mortification is all right ! For workers, well-developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel !" Study, also, was required in order that the monks might, through their learning, exercise well-reasoned judgment as to how to adjust the social and spiritual questions to the needs of the times and bring about an exchange of the highest ideals between the East and the West.

The Swami never tired of impressing upon the minds of his monastic disciples that renunciation with unbroken

Koviloor Digital Library

Brahmacharyam was the only key to Illumination, to the realisation of the Highest. And renunciation was of the mind. The life of the monk was a continuous series of struggles, of warfare with the internal nature. As such, he must practise intense *tapasyâ*, self-control and concentration, if he aspired to achieve victory. Nothing pleased him so much as to see someone or other devoting himself to austerities and meditation in solitude. Once he turned fiercely upon someone who had put to him a worldly-wise question, with the remark. "Go and perform *tapasyâ* for some time in order to purify your mind, and then you will not ask such perverse questions!"

The Swami insisted on his disciples that in their preparatory stage they must submit themselves to strict discipline, and scrupulously observe the regulations about food and other external restrictions enjoined on the Brahmacharya life. On the night of the sixteenth of December, before he left for Baidyanath, he had held a long meeting at the monastery, in which he gave instructions to the younger members concerning the regulation of food, and particularly to eat sparingly at night. Knowing the important action of food in relation to the mind, he said, "Without control over food control of mind is impossible. Much eating causes much evil. Both body and mind are ruined by much eating!" In their present state of spiritual development they were not to eat food touched by non-Hindus. In their preparatory stage they should have *nisthâ* without being narrow-minded and bigotted. They should keep firmly to the life of Brahmacharya and then, they might either leave the order or become Sannyâsin members thereof. And if, later on, they found themselves unable to adhere to the high ideals and rigorous disciplines of the Sannyâsa Ashrama, they were at liberty to return to the house-holder's life. This was a much more desirable and manly step than to lead a hypocritical life and bring degradation to themselves and disgrace to the Order. They were to rise early, perform meditation and religious duties systematically, and they should be particular-

Koviloor Digital Library

ly mindful of *tapasyâ*. They should take special care of their health, and be punctual as to the time of meals and other personal necessities. Their conversation at all times should be on religious subjects. As in Western monasteries, they were not even to read newspapers during a certain period of their training. They were not to mix freely with householders, and on this point, charging them, one day in the month of May, in a fever of monastic passion, he exclaimed :—

".....The men of the world should have no voice in the affairs of the Math. The Sannyâsin should have nothing to do with the rich, his duty is with the poor. He should treat the poor with loving care, and serve them joyfully with all his might. To pay respects to the rich and hang on to them for support, has been the bane of all the monastic communities of our country. A true Sannyâsin should scrupulously avoid that. Such a conduct becomes a public woman rather than one who professes to have renounced the world. How should a man immersed in *Kâma-Kânchana*, become a true devotee of one whose central ideal was the renunciation of *Kâma-Kânchana*? Sri Ramakrishna wept and prayed to the Divine Mother to send him such an one to talk with, as would not have the slightest tinge of *Kâma-Kânchana* in him, for he would say, 'My lips burn when I talk with the worldly-minded.' He also used to say, that he could not even bear the touch of the worldly-minded and the impure. That King of *Tyâgis* can never be preached by men of the world. The latter can never be perfectly sincere, for they cannot but have some selfish motives to serve. If God incarnates Himself as a householder, I can never believe Him to be sincere. When a householder takes the position of the leader of a religious sect, he begins to serve his own interests in the name of principle, hiding the former in the garb of the latter, and the result is, that the sect becomes in time rotten to the core. All religious movements headed by householders have shared the same fate. Without renunciation religion can never stand."

After his return from Baidyanath Swamiji framed certain rules for his young disciples in order to guard them from the least touch of worldliness, or contact with worldly-minded people. The latter should not, out of familiarity, sit or lie on the Sadhus' beds, or sit at meals with them, and so on. Speaking to a disciple he said :—

"Nowadays I feel a sort of disagreeable smell of lust in the bodies and clothes of worldly people. In the Shâstras I had read of it, and

Koviloor Digital Library

now I find why it is that men of purity and renunciation cannot bear the touch or the association of the worldly-minded. With right rigour and wisdom the Shâstras enjoin Brahmachâris to remain absolutely aloof from not only women but also even from those who associate with women. When the Brahmachâris become firmly established in the ideals of Sannyâsa, there is no harm in their mixing with the house-holders."

But it is not to be supposed from the above, that the Swami was a hater of householders and of women. He would not allow the younger members of the Math even to live in the Holy Mother's retreat in Calcutta for the purpose of serving her,—whom he adored as greatly as he did Sri Ramakrishna,—only because it was like a women's Math where lady-devotees lived and many others came to pay their respects to her and to be taught by her. There was the instance of his rating a young Brahmacharin of blameless character, whom he found there after returning from Kashmir, and of his appointing an aged but energetic disciple of his in place of the other. All the above injunctions, be it noted, were only for a select few, whom he wanted, rightly, to be true to their self-imposed vows.

The Swami was not blind to the great virtues and ideals of the householder's life, and he counted among his best friends men and women, whose lives he held up as examples to his monastic followers. He would often say, "I understand the greatness of the ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and serve, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, and reaching out towards the re-organisation and re-ordering of life. Marriage may be the path, in fact, the only path, for certain souls, but he who has adopted the monastic life should know that everything in the world is fraught with fear: Renunciation alone is fearless. My boys, you must appropriate the greatness of the householder's ideal. Our ideal of service to the world must be like that of the ideal householder's which is told in the parable of the self-sacrifice of the family of those birds which, on seeing that two weary travellers who had come as guests, as it were, beneath the shade of their forest tree in which they nested, and who had nothing to eat, hungry though they were, cast themselves

Koviloor Digital Library

into the fire which the travellers had lighted, thus to furnish them with food, because they thought that it was their duty to do so as householders. Teaching the members of the Order in this way he infused into them a spirit, in which the highest service was made one with the highest heights of meditation.

Sometimes in a mood of remonstrance he would exclaim, "Say, what work shall I do in your country! Everyone here wants to lead, and none to obey. In the doing of great works, the commands of the leader have to be implicitly obeyed. If my *gurubhâis* tell me now that I have to pass the rest of my life in cleansing the drain of the Math, know for certain, that I shall obey that order without a word of protest. He only can be a great commander who knows how to obey, without a word of murmur, that which is for the general good." One is reminded here of that same readiness and utter self-abandonment in obedience which the founders of the Western monastic orders demanded of their followers. To plant cabbages with the heads downwards, was one of Saint Francis of Assisi's methods of testing his disciples, or else, that one should remove a heap of stones from one place to another and then back again, as many times as ordered without asking the reason why. The will of the individual must be trained; only in that way, as the Swami held, could the strength of a monastic organisation be maintained.

Swamiji was sometimes tempted to give way to despair and think his life a failure, since there never came to him those "Two thousand enthusiastic youths" to be trained as Sannyâsin workers ready to give their lives for the spiritual regeneration of their motherland,—and that "Three hundred million rupees",—with both of which at his command, he used to say, he could solve all of India's problems and set her on her feet! However he said, "I will do the very best myself, and infuse my spirit in others to continue the work. No rest for me! I shall die in harness! I love action! Life is a battle, and one must always be in action, to use a military phrase. Let me live and die in action!"

Koviloor Digital Library

One evening, while pacing to and fro, restless with the greatness of his thought, he suddenly stopped and exclaimed to a Sannyâsin disciple who happened to be there : "Listen, my boy ! Sri Ramakrishna came and gave his life for the world ; I will also sacrifice my life ; you, also, every one of you, should do the same. All these works, and so forth, are only a beginning. Believe me, from the shedding of our life-blood will arise gigantic heroic workers and warriors of God, who will revolutionise the whole world !" And he would often charge his disciples with those words, which are still ringing in their ears : "Never forget, Service to the world and the realisation of God are the ideals of the monk ! Stick to them ! The monastic is the most immediate of paths ! Between the monk and his God there are no idols ! 'The *Sannyâsin* stands on the head of the Vedas !' say the Vedas, for he is free from churches and sects and religions and prophets and Scriptures ! He is the visible God on earth ! Remember this, and go thou thy ways, Sannyâsin bold, carrying the banner of Renunciation,—the banner of peace, of freedom, of blessedness,—

'Till every land reflect thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted hand,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know in springing joy, their life renewed !' "

Koviloor Digital Library

CXIV.

IN THE PASSING OF THE DAYS.

When the Swami returned to Calcutta he made his abode sometimes in the new monastery and sometimes at Balaram Babu's house. Though his health was still broken, he came with new plans and an invigorated spirit. Baidyanath had done him some good in as much as it had given him rest. His energy now broke forth again. The very day after his return he held a meeting of his brother-monks, telling them that they must now be prepared to go forth, as did the Apostles of Christ, and preach the tidings of Sri Ramakrishna's Gospel unto all the peoples of India. Accordingly, that very day he called Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda, his disciples, and instructed them to proceed at once to Dacca in Eastern Bengal. The former of them humbly protested, saying, "Swamiji, what shall I preach, I know nothing!" "Then, go and preach that!" exclaimed the Master. "That in itself is a great message!" But the disciple, still unconvinced, prayed that he might be allowed to practise further Sâdhanâs and attain Realisation first, for his own salvation. Swamiji thereupon thundered at him saying, "You will go to hell if you seek your own salvation! Seek the salvation of others if you want to reach the Highest! Kill out the desire for personal Mukti! That is the greatest of all Sâdhanâs." And he added sweetly, "Work, my children, work with your whole heart and soul! That is the thing. Mind not the fruits of work. What, even if you go to hell itself working for others? That is better than winning heaven through self-sought salvation!" Afterwards he called these two disciples, bidding them to come into the worship-room of the monastery. The three sat in meditation, the Swami entering the deeper states thereof. Then, he solemnly said, "Now I shall infuse my *Shakti*, my Power

Koviloor Digital Library

into you! The Lord Himself shall be at your back!" On that same day a very tiny *Hilsa* fish was caught in the pond of the monastery, a rare incident, as this species is confined to flowing water only. This was looked upon with childlike glee by Swamiji as an auspicious omen; it was found afterwards that the fish must have made its way through a pipe, leading from the river, which fed the pond. However, the Swami told the Swami Sadananda, "Give this fish to Kali Krishna! It will bring good luck to him." That whole day he was most loving to these two disciples, and gave them privately instructions concerning what they should preach and what *mantrams* they should give to such as might desire to be initiated. Thus especially blessed by their Guru they left for Dacca on the fourth of February. The Swami, moreover, commissioned two of his *gurubhâis*, the Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda, to preach in Guzerat, and they set out on the seventh of the month towards their destination, to carry out his wishes.

It was Swamiji's great desire that the Vedas and other Shâstras should be studied at the Math. Since the time the monastery was removed to Nilambar Mukherjee's Garden, he had started with the help of his *gurubhâis* regular classes on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras, the Gita, the Bhagavata and other Scriptures, and had himself taught for a time Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*. Now he busied himself with a comprehensive study of Sanskrit Scriptures and literature. And it was in these days also that he composed the two *slokas* of his great poem on Sri Ramakrishna which commenced with आचण्डालाप्रतिहतरयः, and the other, the beautiful hymn of taking refuge in the Lord, beginning with ॐ ह्रीं ऋतं, now sung at the *Arati* service at the monastery in honour of the Bhagavan. Sarat Chandra, with whom he talked in Sanskrit for two hours on the day he composed the latter hymn, has said of him, "It seemed as if Sarasvati Herself made Swamiji's throat Her seat. And his Sanskrit was so fluent, powerful and fascinating! I have never heard, before or since, even great Pandits talk in such a

Koviloor Digital Library

beautiful style of diction!" When he had completed the verses, he passed them to the disciple who was well versed in Sanskrit, with the remark: "Examine these and see if there is any defect in the metre. You see, absorbed in my thought when I try to fit my ideas with forms of speech in writing Sanskrit, I at times make grammatical slips. Therefore, revise it, if you find this necessary!" The disciple expostulated saying: "Sire, all know your command of Sanskrit! You have every right to subordinate speech to thought. And what you call your slips are the time-honoured literary license of the Rishis!" The Swami had no attachment for anything which he himself wrote, or which was reported of his lectures and dictations. He would say to those who were in possession of his manuscripts, "Do anything you like with them. Only don't bother me with them. I haven't the patience to revise them." He did not mind if alterations were made so long as the thoughts were clearly expressed and not tampered with. And once he said of poetry, "By the way, I think rhyming is more like child's lisping. It is sing-songy and barbaric. Bother the form so long as the *idea* is poetically expressed!" And to the disciple mentioned above, he often said, "Mind, no sentimentalism in the articles you write! We have had enough of that sort of literature. Our countrymen cannot write anything without this immense outpouring of sentiment, and the result is effiminacy! Strength, man! Strength is what is wanted! Put masculinity in your work! That is what we want nowadays. I am myself going to write in Bengalee, introducing a new style, vibrant with life."

It was a great blow to the disciples and *gurubhâis* of the Swami when several days after, the original manuscript of the hymn intended for chanting in the evening service to Sri Ramakrishna, and the disciple's copy of it could not be found. It was only after four years of the passing of the Swami that the disciple found his copy amongst a heap of old papers in one of his trunks. Then it was brought to light and has been used since in the sacred service at the Math.

Koviloor Digital Library

During this period numerous persons from far and near came to see Swamiji, and constant discussion on religion and philosophy and on the ways and means of material and national improvement went on, recalling the days at Seal's Garden. But the most memorable was the visit of Nag Mahasaya, who came all the way from his distant village-home at Deobhog to meet with Swamiji at the new Math. It was like the coming together of two great forces, one representing the highest type of the ancient *Gârhasthya Dharma*, and the other, the ideal of a new type of Monasticism,—one mad with God-intoxication, the other intoxicated with the idea of bringing out the Divine in man,—but both one in the vision of Sannyâsa and Realisation! A glimpse of the meeting given here will convey to the reader some idea of the sense of appreciation they bore to each other.

After mutual salutation and greeting Nag Mahasaya exclaimed, "Jaya Shankara! Blessed am I to see before me the living Shiva!" and remained standing before Swamiji, with folded hands, notwithstanding his solicitations to make him sit. On being asked about his health he said, "What is the use of enquiring about a worthless lump of flesh and bones! I feel blissful at seeing Shiva Himself!" So saying he fell prostrate before Swamiji, who at once raised him up entreating, "Oh, please do not do such things!" At this time the Upanishad class was being held. Swamiji addressing his disciples said, "Let the class be stopped. You all come and see Nag Mahasaya." When all had sat round the great devotee, Swamiji addressing them observed, "Look! He is a householder, but he has no consciousness whether he has a body or not, whether the universe exists or not! He is always absorbed in the thought of God! He is a living example of what man becomes when possessed of the Supreme Bhakti." Turning to Nag Mahasaya he requested him to tell them something of Sri Ramakrishna, but he with his characteristic humility replied: "What shall I say! I am too unworthy to speak of Him! I have only come to purify myself with the sight of Mahavira who is

Koviloor Digital Library

the complement to the Divine play (*lila*) of the Lord in His Incarnation as Sri Ramakrishna. Victory be to Him, to Him!" Swamiji remarked, "You have truly known what our Master was; we are only beating about the bush!" Whereupon Nag Mahasaya broke forth in protest saying, "Pray, do not speak such meaningless words. You are the shadow of Sri Ramakrishna; both of you are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin! Let him see who has the eyes to see!"

After some talk Swamiji said to him, "It would be so good if you come and live in the Math. These boys will have a living example before them to help mould their lives. The great Bhakta replied in a mood of resignation, "I once asked the Master's permission to give up the world. He said, 'Live in the world.' So I am following His command, and come occasionally to be blessed with the sight of you all, His children." Hearing that Swamiji wished to visit sometime his home in Eastern Bengal, he exclaimed, overwhelmed with joy: "Ah me, will that day ever come! Shall I have that rare fortune! That part of the country will be sanctified into Kashi, yes, Kashi itself, by the dust of your feet! Who can understand what you are, who has not the purified vision! Only our Divine Master did. Others, His followers, merely believe in what He said, only believe, but have not understood." Then the following dialogue ensued between them:—

Swamiji: Now my only wish is to awaken the country. This great giantess is as if sleeping, having lost all faith in her own strength,—sleeping, dead to all outward appearance. If we can awaken her once more to the consciousness of her infinite strength in the Sanatana Dharma, we will know that our Lord and ourselves were not born in vain! Only that one desire remains; Mukti and the like seem like trash before it! Do bless me that I may succeed.

Nag Mahasaya: The Lord is ever blessing you! Who can check your will? Your will and His are one. Jaya Ramakrishna!

Swamiji: Oh, if only I had had a strong body, so needful for work! See, how since my coming back to India, my

Koviloor Digital Library

health is impaired, frustrating all my plans of work. In Europe and America I was so well.

Nag Mahasaya: In living in a body, as the Master said, one has to pay the tax in the shape of disease and afflictions. But yours is a chest of gold *mohurrs*, and so it has to be guarded with vigilant care. Alas, who will do that! Who will understand what it means to the world!

Swamiji: Everyone in the Math looks after me with great love and care.

Nag Mahasaya: Blessed are they that serve you, for thus they are doing good not only to themselves but to the world at large, whether they understand it or not!

It is impossible to express in writing the manner and the spirit with which Nag Mahasaya spoke these words of appreciation of Swamiji. To the outside world they may well appear too fulsome and theatrical, and even blasphemous; but to one who knew that godly soul, they will strike as spontaneous, coming out of his deepest conviction. And for those who were present at the meeting, or heard him speak anywhere, it was difficult to check tears of emotion,—for Nag Mahasaya had the rare power of breathing his thoughts and yearnings, —by a few simple words, or even by a mere look,—into the soul of his hearers, until the tenderest feelings became living and vibrant! And oh, the faith of the man! Did he not say when asked once, if Sri Ramakrishna was an Avatara,— "What shall I say of the Lord! I hold everyone of His disciples as an Avatâra!"

Once Srimati Sarala Devi, B.A., heard that Swamiji could cook very nicely and spoke of it to the Sister Nivedita. Coming to know of it, Swamiji invited them both to dine one day at the Math, and himself prepared some of the dishes. In the course of a talk with the ladies he asked the Sister Nivedita to prepare a *chillum* of tobacco for him, as he would do any of his Indian disciples. The Sister at once got up and went to do it most gladly, regarding it as a privilege to serve her Master. When the ladies had gone, Swamiji said to his *gurubhâis*, that he had asked of that service of Nivedita,

Koviloor Digital Library

only because he had been told that there was a feeling abroad among some of the educated community in Bengal, that he had secured and held his Western disciples by means of adulation and pandering to their tastes.

During the early summer of 1899, the Swami's health was again very bad and the Zamindars of Narail, his admirers, placed at his disposal a *bazrâ*, or houseboat, so that he might pass the mornings and evenings on the Ganges imbibing fresher air. On many an occasion he would spend the time in meditation, seated on the roof, and at others he would be like a great child, "cheerfulness in his face, softness in his looks, abstraction in his mood, careless about his person and his clothes, and every movement bespeaking the mastery over the senses." Generally it would be northward in the direction of Dakshineswar that the Swami's boat would drift, and in the twilight stillness, or later on at night, it was noticed that he would often plunge in deep thought while passing there. These evening trips were a great recreation to him after a whole day's teaching and preaching to his own disciples and all those who flocked to him from Calcutta.

Health or no health, he was always busy in these days, always ready to help others. Under medical advice he had to desist from appearing before the public as a lecturer. However, he attended a lecture delivered by the Sister Nivedita on "The Young India Movement," on the twenty-sixth of February, and was always the central figure in the Sunday meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission. On several occasions he accepted the invitation to dinner parties given in his honour at the residences of distinguished Calcutta citizens, who were delighted with his talks. The last of these that he attended was on the seventeenth of June, as the guest of the Maharajah Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore, who had found his "Raja Yoga" most interesting, and expressed his eager desire to learn more on that subject in a private audience with him.

The four preachers sent out by Swamiji did excellent work in the various cities they visited. Everywhere they

Koviloor Digital Library

found great missionary opportunities for the spreading of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, which appealed directly to all hearts, mainly because of its simplicity and directness. The Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda started, at the earnest desire of the citizens of Dacca, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission there. "In a short time," wrote a correspondent to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, "the young Swamis have been able to cultivate a feeling of close sympathy and love for themselves and their work, which is growing deeper and deeper in the hearts of the people everyday." The Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda made a tour of the cities in Kathiawar, and were enthusiastically welcomed by devoted admirers of Swamiji, whom they found everywhere. By their lectures and talks on Vedanta, the Swamis created a profound impression on the minds of the citizens of that distant province. In reporting one of their lectures, Mr. C. C. Bohra writes as follows to the *Brahmavadin*, from Bhavnagar, on the 23rd of April :—

"The Swami Saradananda's lecture on 'The Essence of the Vedas', made a deep impression upon all the people of Bhavnagar, Kathiawar. It was delivered in the lecture-hall of the Bhavnagar High School on 15th April 1899.....His noble figure, his majestic voice, the fire and grandeur of his eloquence, gave him a power to inculcate into the minds of his audience the Vedanta doctrine far better than any other teacher of Vedantism I have known."

After three months of preaching and teaching, the four missionaries returned to the monastery at the call of Swamiji, who was rejoiced to hear the reports of their success.

As early as the sixteenth of December the Swami had given out his intention of going to the West. And now with the approach of summer he was urged by his friends and physicians to do so at once, as his health was in the balance. He himself wrote to an American disciple on April the eleventh : "Two years of physical suffering have taken away twenty years from my life. Well, but the soul changeth not, does it ? It is there, the same madcap—Atman—mad upon one idea, intent and intense." The sea-voyage, it was thought, would do him immense good. It was finally decided

Koviloor Digital Library

that he would sail from Prinsep's Ghat, Calcutta, on the twentieth of June. It was decided also that the Swami Turiyananda would accompany him. And as the Sister Nivedita had intended to sail for England in the interest of her Girls' School, she too was to join the Swami. Prior to the date of departure, for more than a month, the monastery had literally swarmed with visitors and devotees. The Swami spent up to the very last moment in teaching and instruction. And his voice would be heard now and then, singing some devotional song, with the outpouring of his whole soul. In his own heart, there was no sense of separation in connection with his intended departure. On the day before their leaving photographs were taken, singly of the Swami, and his *gurubhâi*, and in group of the Brotherhood.

The Swami Turiyananda was the Sannyâsin who was held in great love and reverence by the Brotherhood for the austere life of Brahmacharyam he had led from his very boyhood, and for his spirit of burning renunciation and his highly developed spiritual nature. Versed in Sanskrit and an adept in meditation, he had all along from the days of the Alumbazar Math been training the younger members of the monastery, by holding classes and talks and, above all, by his exemplary life. When it was proposed that he was to accompany Swamiji as a preacher to America, he expressed the desire of taking with him some standard works on the Vedanta philosophy in Sanskrit, for help and reference. Swamiji exclaimed: "Of learning and books they have had enough! They have seen the Kshattra power,—now I want to show them the *Brâhmana*!" He meant that in himself the West had seen the combative spirit and energy in the defence of the Sanatana Dharma; and now the time had come when the people of the antipodes should have before them the example of a man of meditation in his Brother, born and bred in the best traditions and rigorous disciplines of Brâhmanhood.

The Swami Turiyananda being a man of meditation was averse to the life of public preaching. Swamiji had tried

Koviloor Digital Library

hard to persuade him to come out in the arena, but in vain. At last one day, in Darjeeling, when all argument had failed, the latter modestly insisting that public preaching was not in his line, Swamiji put forth his arms round his *gurubhâi's* neck and laying his head against his breast, wept like a child, saying, "Dear Haribhai, can't you see I have been laying down my life, inch by inch, in fulfilling this mission of my Master, till I am on the verge of death ! Can you merely look on and not come to my help by relieving me of a part of my great burden ?" The *gurubhâi* was overpowered. It was too much for the great love he bore for the leader. All hesitation went the way of the winds. Then and there he pledged, unflinchingly, to do whatever Swamiji would bid him do. So it was that when he was asked to make himself ready for accompanying him as a teacher to the West, he took it as the Will of the Mother and resigned himself to the task with a supreme self-abandonment.

On the night of the nineteenth, a formal meeting was held at the monastery, at which the junior members presented their Superior with a parting address, as they did also to the Swami Turiyananda. The latter gave a brief reply. The Swami's own reply took the form of a short lecture on "Sannyâsa: Its Ideal and Practice," in which he insisted upon the Sannyâsin's love of death, that is to say, holding one's life as a sacrifice to the world, because then all actions would be performed selflessly and with a view to the good of others. Too high and impossible an ideal was wrong. That had been the trouble with the Buddhist and Jain reformers. Too much practicality was also wrong. The too extremes must be avoided. "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields (Swamiji said, pointing to the meadows of the Math). You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the Shâstras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market..." They must remember that the aim

Koviloor Digital Library

of the monastery was Man-making. They themselves must be Rishis. "The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart." They must have a deep regard for their *sangha* and be inflexibly obedient. Having given them this final instruction the Swami, gazing lovingly, as a father upon his children, blessed them with an ardent benediction.

On the day of departure, the Holy Mother gave a sumptuous feast to Swamiji and the Swami Turiyananda and to all her Sannyâsin children of the Math, at her Calcutta house. Receiving her blessings, the two *gurubhâis* left in the afternoon for Prinsep's Ghat, where they found numerous friends assembled to bid them and the Sister Nivedita farewell. Swamiji was in the best of spirits and bade them all to be of good cheer. Needless to say that there was much sadness and everyone was visibly moved when the time for final greetings came, but the Swami, they knew, was always with them at heart.

The Swami had now given his ideas to India ; he had now given his message, likewise, to the little band of Sannyâsins and earnest-minded followers. All over India his ideas were being spread through the medium of newspapers and magazines that literally lionised him. But his heart was mostly concerned with his monastic brethren, into whose keeping he had committed the further spreading of his message. He had now fulfilled his Mission in India ; and with this consciousness, and heeding other calls from workers and disciples in the West, he again turned his face towards the Occident.

Koviloor Digital Library

CXV.

HOW THE MOVEMENT WENT.—I.

(PREACHING WORK, 1897—JUNE, 1899.)

Before the reader's attention is directed towards the activities of the Swami Vivekananda during his second visit to the West, it will be interesting to know how the movement initiated by him in its varied spheres in India and abroad, was being carried on by his co-workers whom he had inspired with the ideal of preaching and practising the practical Vedanta. In doing so, one sees four prominent features which characterised it up to the present stage. First, the propaganda of preaching the Vedanta by individual workers of the Order ; second, the founding of monastic centres ; third, the starting of temporary centres for the relief of general distress in times of famine and plague ; and fourth, the establishment of a permanent asylum for orphans. One should not fail to take these into account, as they afford a true perspective to the life of the great monk and prophet. On the other hand, any detailed description of the activities of the Order in these directions is not within the scope of the present work. *It is intended, therefore, only to touch on the works carried on by the Brotherhood*, so as to present them in the briefest compass here, before proceeding further.

To recapitulate the grounds already covered : We have seen the inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, the establishment of the Math in Belur as the headquarters of the Order on a permanent footing and the organising of it on a solid basis, the starting of the centre and the work of preaching by the Swami Ramakrishnananda in Madras, the opening of the Girls' School by the Sister Nivedita, the sending out of four preachers to Guzerat and Eastern Bengal, and the Vedanta work carried on by the Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda in England and America

Koviloor Digital Library

up to the end of 1896. We have mentioned the famine-relief operations conducted by the Swami Akhandananda in the District of Murshidabad in 1897, and the sanitary work initiated in 1898 in connection with the plague epidemic in Calcutta. Instead of dilating on these matters here, let us take notice of their subsequent progress and of others.

The Ramakrishna Mission held its weekly sittings in Calcutta regularly throughout 1897. Some very instructive and thoughtful papers were read and speeches delivered by its members, among them being, (1) Reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna by Mr. G. C. Ghosh and Mr. M. N. Gupta ; (2) The Birth and Renunciation of Buddha ; (3) Work of Swami Vivekananda ; (4) Jnana and Bhakti ; (5) Life of Shukadeva ; (6) Life of Saint Haridas ; (7) Philosophy of Worship ; (8) Worship of God ; (9) The Existence of God ; (10) The Need of Work ; (11) Divine Grace and Law of Karma ; (12) Life of Buddha and the Philosophy of Buddhism ; (13 Supernatural Help and Self-exertion ; (14) The Divine Grace ; (15) The Love of God ; (16) The Saving Power of the Name of God ; (17) Karma ; (18) The Tantras. Under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission a public meeting was held in the Albert Hall in March 1898, in which the Sister Nivedita spoke on "Kali and Her Worship." Under its auspices also, the Swami Saradananda after his return from America gave a series of lectures on the Religion of Vedanta in the same Hall, which were highly appreciated by the Calcutta public. The Association had to postpone its sittings from the middle of April to July 1898, owing to the prevalence of plague and the consequent scare in the city. At its subsequent meetings, the Swami Saradananda gave a series of learned lectures on the Vedas in a conversational style, which were very popular.

The Swami Vivekananda's American and English work had exercised nowhere a greater influence on India than in the Madras Presidency. It was natural, therefore, that the Swami Ramakrishnananda should be most enthusiastically received in Madras and should have calls to preach in various places. With his untiring zeal he succeeded soon after his

Koviloor Digital Library

arrival there in opening classes in different parts of the town and the suburbs. He conducted altogether eleven classes, and in these he expounded the Upanishads, the Gita, the six systems of Hindu philosophy, and the Puranas, such as, the Bhâgavata, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. These classes were held at Castle Kernan, at the Young Men's Hindu Association, and at the Societies at Saidapet, Triplicane, Mylapore, Purasawakam and Chintadripet. Besides these, he delivered more than thirty lectures in the smaller towns near Madras. Some of the Societies conducted by him other than those just mentioned were, - The Higher Truth School, in which he gave sixty-eight lectures in the course of nineteen months; The Komaliswaram Petta Society; The Egmore Society and the Rayapuram Gita Society. Under his guidance a Vivekananda Society was established at Vaniyambady, and on January the twentieth, 1900, he opened its newly-erected Hall dedicated to Swamiji's cause. He also initiated the celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday as a public festival in Madras, the chief feature of which was the feeding of thousands of the poor, on a scale which exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the Madrasis themselves. He also helped in collecting a considerable sum from among his admirers and students in aid of the famine-relief and the orphanage started by the Swami Akhandananda. The steady, silent and useful work that he was doing, the unostentatious and exemplary life of complete renunciation that he led, and the broad catholicity of his views that he had imbibed from his Master, made him deservedly popular and respected among all classes of men.

About the middle of 1897, Swamiji deputed the Swami Shivananda to work in Ceylon, in response to an appeal for a teacher made by the leading Hindu communities to him while he had been there. Besides arousing an interest for the Vedanta philosophy among the Tamil and the Singalese population there, the Swami opened classes for the teaching of Raja Yoga and the Gita, of which the Gita class was attended by several Europeans and visitors. His forceful,

Koviloor Digital Library

patient and painstaking ways of teaching for several months deeply impressed his students. One of them, Mrs. Pickett, to whom he gave the name of Hari Priyâ, he especially trained so as to make her qualified for preaching Vedanta to Europeans. He sent her with his authority to Australia and New Zealand to prepare the way for a teacher of Vedanta there. She made a tour of both the countries, interested earnest students in her cause and opened classes in Adelaide S Victoria and Nelson.

The Swami Abhayananda, the first Sannyâsin disciple of the Swami Vivekananda in America, after nearly four years of brilliant preaching and teaching in Chicago and other cities, came to India in March, 1899, and delivered stirring and learned lectures in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Dacca, Mymensing and Barisal. Under the presidency of the Hon Mr. Justice Ranade, she spoke in Bombay on "The Vedanta and Its Prospect in the West." During her short sojourn in Calcutta she delivered three lectures, on "Material and Spiritual Evolution," "Law of Karma," and "Salvation *versus* Liberation." She was invited by the newly-started Ramakrishna Mission of Dacca under the patronage of the Hindu community at large, and was hailed on arrival there with great enthusiasm. An address of welcome was presented to her at the Northbrook Hall, to which she made a suitable reply. Besides many talks and discourses, she delivered three lectures in Dacca to crowded audiences, namely, on Religion, Love of God, and Advaitavâda.

The idea and the necessity of starting a monastery in a cool, secluded region of the Himalayas where the East and the West could meet on an equal footing in love and unity of purpose, exchanging the highest ideals of each, and practise the Advaita philosophy, always occupied the Swami's serious thought and attention since his visit to England. He had written to a friend that this monastery must be about 7,000 feet above sea-level, as he did not want to kill his Western disciples, who would come to work in India for the furtherance of his cause, by forcing on them the Indian mode of

Koviloor Digital Library

living and the fiery plains. During his tours of preaching he had himself looked for a suitable site in the hills in and about Dharmasala, Murree, Srinagar, Dehra-Dun and the town of Almora, but none answered the purpose satisfactorily. At length, when he went to Kashmir, from Almora in July 1898, he left the matter in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. These disciples in the company of the Swami Swarupananda made a tour into the interior of the District, and in the course of an extensive and diligent search, came upon the beautiful estate of Mayavati with its thickly-wooded hills commanding a magnificent view of the snowy ranges. It was also at an elevation of 6,800 feet and fifty miles from Almora. Their choice at once fell upon it as *the* spot for their cherished scheme of starting the Advaita Ashrama and of finding a permanent home for the "Prabuddha Bharata." The purchase was promptly made and they came to make it their retreat on the 19th of March 1899, whi chhappened to be the auspicious birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. The Press was removed thither and the Advaita Ashrama was founded with the heartfelt blessings of Swamiji and under his guidance.

It is not too much to say that the Advaita Ashrama is the most unique and representative of, and yet distinct from, all the institutions founded by the Swami, as the following lines which he wrote to the joint-founders of the Ashrama setting forth its ideal and principles, will show :—

"In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe ; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of man ; knowing Him, and therefore the Universe, as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to infinite freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth,—*The Oneness of All Beings*. 'Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom.

"Hitherto it has not been possible to preach this Noble Truth entirely free from the settings of dualistic weakness ; this alone, we are con-

Koviloor Digital Library

vinced, explains why it has not been more operative and useful to mankind at large.

"To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

"Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone."

Here no external worship of images, pictures or symbols of God, or any religious ceremony or ritual except the Viraja Homa should be performed. Aye, the Swami would not here have even the worship of his own Master, which formed the centralised feature in the other monastic centres.

Before he left on his second visit to the West, Swamiji in compliance with the request made had completed the arrangement of sending four of his disciples to help in the work of the Ashrama. Accordingly, within a week of his departure, the Swamis Sachchidananda (senior), Virajananda, Vimalananda, and the Brahmachâri Harendra Nath left the Belur Math to take up enthusiastically their new duties, which consisted then mainly of the construction of a building for the monks, road-making and agriculture, and assisting in the publication of the journal.

Besides these institutions now firmly established, the three magazines already mentioned, namely, the Brahmavadin of Madras, the Prabuddha Bharata of Almora, and the Udbodhan of Calcutta, started either under the auspices or under the direct control and guidance of Swamiji and conducted by his Gurubhâis and disciples, did a vast amount of educational work in India and abroad. They spread far and wide his ideas and those of his Master. They brought out, vindicated and interpreted the thoughts and ideals of the ancient Indian sages and philosophers. They published the reports of the various works done by the members of the Order, and also their writings and lectures. They helped

Koviloor Digital Library

in raising contributions, by appealing to the public, to enable the Brotherhood to carry on relief operations in times of famine and plague. And their conductors, by all these means and by bringing out Swamiji's lectures and their translations in the Vernaculars contributed towards the stimulating of the self-consciousness of the nation to the sense of its glorious inheritance in the domain of religion and the great duty that lay before it.

Turning now to the Vedanta movement carried on in the West during the Swami's absence, we notice that the Swami Abhedananda who had taken charge of the classes in London continued them ably, and daily added to his own power as a teacher. He also conducted classes in Wimbledon and other places and began a series of lectures from January 12th, after the Christmas and New Year's holidays. His exposition of Vedanta was very lucid and instructive. The plan pursued was rather different from that formerly followed. One lecture given early in the week in the morning was repeated to a different audience assembled on another evening ; a portion of this evening and the whole of another morning was given to questions and objections arising either from the lecture or the Vedanta position generally. This new plan gave great satisfaction, and several positions and difficult points were heartily worked upon, and much light was thrown upon them. There was no doubt that he was becoming more and more popular. But owing to the urgent and repeated calls from the Vedanta Society of New York for a Swami to take charge of the centre, he was obliged to leave for America in the latter part of July 1897, after working for some ten months in London, and the classes which he had been conducting had to be temporarily disbanded, though the work was never at a standstill. The disciples of Swamiji and other students interested in Vedanta, continued to meet in small groups and helped each other and themselves by readings, talks and discussions, with unabated zeal, looking forward to the Swami Vivekananda's return to them at no distant future.

Koviloor Digital Library

As the Swami Saradananda was busily occupied in Cambridge, Boston and its vicinity and could not be spared to take charge of the New York centre, Miss Ellen Waldo, known among the Brotherhood as the Sister Haridâsi, successfully conducted the classes since the former's visit in the last winter, till the close of the session in May 1897, for the ensuing summer. The series of thoughtful and scholarly lectures that she delivered on the various aspects of Vedanta during this period, showed how beautifully and profoundly she had assimilated the teachings of her Master.

It is well nigh impossible to compress within a few pages a full and systematic description of the wide-spread propaganda carried on by the Swamis Saradananda, Abhedananda and Abhayananda in America. Any attempt to give a cursory view of it will fail to convey to the readers an idea of the extent of the work and the ever-growing influence it exerted over the minds of numerous men and women who thirsted for the new and satisfying light from the East. These missionaries of Vedanta carried their Gospel through some of the principal States, making their headquarters in Boston, New York and Chicago, and the influential newspapers, except those of the bigoted sections of Christians, often contained eloquent editorials expressive of appreciation of their lectures and admiration for their personalities. We will only touch on a few points here and there, which must be in the way of a mere index to their missionary career.

Of the important part which the Swami Saradananda played in the Greenacre Conferences of the Monsalvat School of Comparative Religions in the July of 1896, of his subsequent lecture tours in Brooklyn and Boston, and in New York in the autumn, mention has been made elsewhere. *The Boston Evening Transcript* in reporting his first lecture delivered in America wrote :—

"The Hindu teacher has the impassive fascination of his race, and although this was his first public lecture in the English tongue he made himself heard and understood with great clearness and force.....

Koviloor Digital Library

"After the lecture there was an interesting discussion in which the profound principles of the Vedanta philosophy were brought out with still more telling force."

Another paper commenting upon his second lecture said among other things :—

"To follow the Oriental mind into the realm of metaphysics, is to the Occidental like an etherial swimming lesson.....

"To hear a Hindu teacher speak of far-off ideas and theories is in itself a stimulus and refreshment to the mind. It is like reading in the original what one first became familiar with through a translation..... We see one who has been through a severe course of speculative discipline required of Hindu teachers, and is therefore the best exponent of its significance, one who with the confidence and assurance of the adept, not so much argues as declares his faith....."

At the end of October 1896, the Swami Saradananda gave a beautiful lecture at the Brooklyn Ethical Association on "The Ethical Ideas of the Hindus," and also spoke at the Vedanta Society of New York. Returning to Cambridge, Mass., he taught there until the New Year. Then for two months he took charge of the classes at the Vedanta Society of New York and delivered several lectures on Sundays at the New Century Hall, on the Vedanta philosophy. Until late in the spring he was a prominent figure in the Cambridge Conferences, and those who attended its meetings were deeply impressed with his lucid exposition of the subtleties of Hindu thought and his spirit of friendliness and toleration for other religions. After a short visit to New York in May, he went to Greenacre to be present again at the next annual session of the Conference. There he gave a series of delightful lectures on the "Ideals in Literature," dealing with the Poetry of the Vedas, the Ancient and the Modern Indian Drama and the Indian Epics. He also spoke on the "Evolution and Purpose of the Cosmos," from the point of view of the Sânkhya and Vedantic philosophers. In the autumn he is seen again in Boston speaking before the Free Religious Association on the "Sympathy of Religions." The whole of October he lectured three times a week in Montclair to large numbers of cultured people, who were so interested that they begged him at the end of the visit to have the teaching continued by the Swami Abhedananda.

Koviloor Digital Library

The Swami Saradananda, as previously noted, was called back by Swamiji to help his Indian work, especially in organising the chief monastery at Belur and training the disciples there as preachers for the West. It was a great blow to his American students to lose their beloved teacher in view of the enlarged spheres of usefulness that were opening up before him in the coming year. He left New York for India on the 12th of January 1898. Dr. Lewis G. Janes, Director of the Cambridge Conferences, writing to the editor of the *Brahmavadin* in appreciation of him and his work says :—

"The many friends of the Swami Saradananda in Cambridge and vicinity cannot permit him to return to India without expressing through your columns, their hearty appreciation of the excellent educational work which he accomplished in this country, and the fine accompaniment of personal character and influence which greatly strengthened the effect of the work wherever it was conducted. On every hand, the friends of the Swami express a sense of personal loss in his departure, and the hope that he may some time return to America, where his work is so heartily appreciated.

"In Cambridge, the classes in the Vedanta philosophy, constituting a single feature in the broad field of comparative study outlined for the Cambridge Conferences, attracted large and intelligent audiences, in part made up of Professors and Students in Harvard University. The Swami's exposition of the principles of the Advaita doctrine, in just comparison with other views which are held in India, was admirably lucid and clear. His replies to questions were always ready and satisfactory. His great fairness of mind and soundness of judgment enabled him to present the doctrine in a manner which at once convinced all of his sincerity and earnestness, while it disarmed that factious opposition which is sometimes stirred up by a more dogmatic and assertive manner.

"In Boston, Waltham and Worcester, Mass., the Swami Saradananda also conducted courses of lectures which were largely attended, and which everywhere manifested a sustained interest in his subject. At Worcester, he addressed the students of Clark University, by invitation of President G. Stanley Hall, one of our ablest educators ; and in Providence, R. I., he spoke before the Philosophical Club of Brown University, by invitation of Prof. E. B. Delabarre, whose guest he was in that city. * * *

"In the judgment of many of their best friends, the teachers of the Vedanta have done wisely in allying themselves with such broad and

Koviloor Digital Library

unsectarian movements as the Monsalvat School, the Cambridge Conferences and the Brooklyn Ethical Association instead of undertaking a sectarian propaganda. In this way they have been able to reach a large number of intelligent and cultivated people, the professors and students in our universities, and others, who would have been repelled by a sectarian propaganda. They have lent their potent aid to break down the sectarian spirit, to assert the unity and universality of truth, and to encourage people to seek for it under all the various guises in which the religious sentiment manifests itself. In so doing, the teachers of the Vedanta have strengthened the hands of the members of the Free Religious Association, and the Liberal Congress of Religions, who have been waging an up-hill conflict with sectarian influences in this country; and have helped to preserve and expand the spirit of brotherly love and justice to all religious faiths, which was the outgrowth of the Parliament of Religions, against the misguided efforts of some even of the avowed friends of the Parliament of 1893. They have also enabled their friends to repel the unfriendly assaults which have recently been made upon the Oriental teachers in this country, by setting an example of courtesy and brotherly kindness, which is the severest possible rebuke to unjust and illiberal critics—whether among the avowed opponents of the Vedanta, or masquerading in the guise of friendship and quondam 'conversion' to its tenets. • • • •"

Since the arrival of the Swami Abhedananda in New York on 6th of August, the interest in the Vedanta philosophy received a new impetus. At the end of the month he visited Philadelphia, Washington, Virginia and New Paltz. From September 29th he established himself in New York, holding regular classes at the Vedanta Society, and giving public lectures on Sundays to audiences that went on steadily increasing in number. A more active demand was noticed for the Swami Vivekananda's books and pamphlets, even from such a distant place as California. He lectured also once every week from November in Montclair, and earnest calls for classes came from Brooklyn and other quarters, which he was unable to undertake for want of time.

During the month of January the Swami gave twelve lectures drawing large and intelligent audiences. Considering the importance and the newness of the subjects of teaching to the majority of them, several of his lectures were by special request repeated even a third and fourth time, in order to

Koviloor Digital Library

enable them to have a clear comprehension of the principles involved. Besides these, he opened Gita classes in New York and Brooklyn and aroused such sincere interest that not a few of his students began learning the Sanskrit language with a view to gain a first-hand knowledge of the Gita and also of other ancient Hindu literature yet untranslated. Over and above his erudition in Sanskrit literature and philosophy, his careful studies in Western science and philosophy, gave him an additional advantage in demonstrating the fact that the Vedanta was much in harmony with some of the most advanced ideas of modern science. By this way he created a respect for his teachings and enlisted such adherents as would not be convinced unless shown that Huxley, or Tyndal, or Spencer or Kant agreed in substance with a particular view advanced by the Vedanta. He opened, moreover, regular classes on Yoga and meditation, which were filled with earnest students who began to learn and practise Prânâyâma with great zeal and devotion.

During this first period of his work, the Swami met many representative thinkers in the world of art, science and religion, both in private life and in social gatherings, and by his unfailing courtesy and readiness in answering questions he awakened their friendly interest in his mission and teachings. One of the most liberal and enlightened of New York clergymen even went so far as to distribute the Swami's lecture programmes among his congregation, advising them to go and listen to his teachings.

Numerous invitations to lecture in clubs came in and the Swami accepted as many as he possibly could. Thus, before the end of February he had spoken before the Twentieth Century Club and the Metaphysical Club of Brooklyn, and the Twilight Club of New York. The *New York Tribune* of March 6 1896, in the course of reporting his lectures and his work wrote :—

".....His face is fine-chiselled and with unusual intellectual strength shows the singular dignity, gentleness and repose of his people. His hands are no less individual and expressive of high character.....

Koviloor Digital Library

'As a speaker he is self-contained and attractive, and his lectures are clear, original explanations of philosophic subjects related to practical living. His command of English is as perfect as is his pronunciation, with rarely a slip in accent, which adds to the charm of a pleasing delivery..... To an occasional attendant the growth of interest is unmistakable in steadily increasing audiences of intelligent persons, many of them members of orthodox churches, with a representation of well-known persons in public life..... "

With the month of April the present session of work in New York came to an end. In all, the Swami had delivered eighty-six lectures in Mott's Memorial Hall alone. As the foregoing will show, he made a splendid record of arduous work well done, and secured the lasting esteem of all who had come within the sphere of his influence. Several of the best journals of the State published throughout appreciative accounts of his teaching and his personality, such as, The Sun, The New York Tribune, The Critic, The Literary Digest, The Times, The Intelligence, and Mind. On the other hand the occasional criticisms in religious journals, only showed the deep influence that the Vedanta was making for itself in church circles as well as among liberal thinkers and the recognition it was forcing from Western theologians. The untiring labours of the Swami Abhedananda, following upon those of the Swami Vivekananda resulted in the firm establishment of the Vedanta in New York. The former had also the Vedanta Society incorporated duly under the laws of the State of New York.

The season ended, the Swami Abhedananda went to Washington for a rest, but so interested became the people to hear about the Vedanta that he gave several addresses there in parlours and studios, and two public lectures, one in the Peoples' Church and the other in the Institute of Practical Christianity. He was introduced to President McKinley and was kindly received, with friendly enquiries about himself and his country. He also met the Hon. John G. Brady, Governor of Alaska, and was the guest of Dr. Elmer Gates, the celebrated scientist and psychologist. He next went to Boston and lectured in the Free Religious Association of

Koviloor Digital Library

America. Through the kindness of Professors James and Royce, the Swami had the privilege of being present at the class lectures in philosophy of the Harvard University. Prof. William James at the end of his class lecture invited his students to hear the Swami's lecture on the following day, and suggested to him that the subject be, Unity in Variety. Prof. James, as also Prof. Lanman, the great Sanskrit scholar, were present at the lecture which was received with marked attention and favour. The Swami received during his stay many friendly attentions from professors in Harvard and was the guest of several in their homes. Then he spent some days in Medford, Newton Highlands and Salem, and lectured in those places. After returning to New York he went to Montclair, and on invitation of the official board of Unity Church he conducted the Sunday service and addressed the congregation on "The True Basis of Morality" to the great satisfaction of all. From there he went to various places and lectured and taught in nearly all of them till the end of July. The next month he spent at Eliot, Maine, where he discoursed on Vedanta at the sessions of the Monsalvat School for the Comparative Study of Religions. After four weeks' work at Greenacre the Swami was finally able to enjoy a well-earned rest at the White Mountains in New Hampshire, and later at the country homes of his friends in the Catskill Mountains. He was invited to stop at Newport on the way. The Rev. R. Heber Newton, D. D., one of the most liberal and highly esteemed Episcopal clergymen, entertained the Swami at his country residence in Long Island, where he gave an informal talk on the Hindu view of Jesus.

The New York work began in November in a larger and better hall situated in a more central position, and continued throughout, except for the Christmas and New Year holidays, making itself felt more and more as a power for good. There is no need of repeating the similar course of teaching work carried on by the Swami with renewed vigour as in the preceding year, but with an added experience of American life and its spiritual needs and difficulties.

Koviloor Digital Library

On the occasion of the meeting of the Vedanta Society on March 31st, 1899, there was a large attendance who listened with delight to the account of life in India given by Mrs. Bull, who had just returned to America after a year's stay in India. Being a disciple of the Swami Vivekananda she had been able, she said, to see a side of Hindu life that is usually impenetrably closed to all foreigners. Especially, she had come into close and harmonious intercourse with the sweet and gentle women of India whose lovely characters particularly charmed and attracted her. She told them that it was really remarkable to find how much there was in common between herself and these retiring souls to whom the noise and bustle of the outer world was all unknown.

On Easter Sunday, the Swami Abhedananda initiated four Brahmachârins. During the summer he left New York to visit Worcester, Boston, Cambridge and other New England points and met many able and influential persons. Among others were, Mr. Edison, the great inventor; Joseph Jefferson, the famous actor; William Dean Howells, the novelist; and professors in Cornell, Iowa, Yale and other universities. Before leaving New York the Swami had addressed the Sanskrit classes in Columbia College of the city, and also one of the best social and literary clubs—Barnard—giving in each an account of the religious ideas of the Hindus. The citizens of Worcester after hearing him twice, urged him to give a course of lectures. This was not possible owing to engagements elsewhere. On April 25th, he lectured on the Vedanta philosophy before the North Shore Club at Lynn, a club composed of cultivated women. Swami Vivekananda had addressed the same club a few years ago on the Manners and Customs of the Hindus. The next day he spoke in Waltham at the Psychomath, a club frequently addressed before by the Swami Saradananda. On 27th he lectured in Cambridge before the Episcopal Theological School, the audience being students who were preparing to become ministers in Churches. On April 30th, before the Cambridge Conference he spoke on the Religious Ideas

Koviloor Digital Library

in Ancient India. Prof. William James and other eminent scholars of Cambridge as well as ministers of Churches were among the audience. He gave many other lectures in the vicinity of Boston throughout May. These summer tours of the Swami played an important part in disseminating the Vedanta teachings in widely separated sections of the country.

No less active was the Swami Abhayananda in preaching the Gospel of Vedanta in the United States, with her characteristic zeal and energy. Herself being an eloquent public speaker and an accomplished scholar in Western philosophies, years before she was initiated into Sannyâsa by the Swami Vivekananda at the Thousand Island Park in July of 1895, she was able to arouse a profound interest in her teaching and an esteem for her remarkable personality wherever she went bearing the message of the Advaita. After teaching and preaching from city to city for nearly two years she came to Chicago in March 1897. Within four weeks the power of her teaching had been so strongly felt that men and women of intelligence and of high social standing gathered round her, and urged upon her to establish herself there. She accordingly founded the Advaita Society and made that "magic city of the West" the scene of her ministrations. By her numerous lectures and sermons, as also talks and interviews, which were extensively reported in the dailies and weeklies of the city, she was able to reach a far wider circle of earnest souls than those of her listeners. We need not enter into detail of the work done by her with ceaseless labour in Chicago, beyond mentioning the fact that several of her enthusiastic students took the Brahmacharya, Vânaprastha and Sannyâsa orders with appropriate solemn ceremonies from her hands, and continued the work of the Society during her absence in India.

Thus one sees that the seeds sown by the Swami Vivekananda on the American soil went on ever growing vigorously as days passed, striking their roots deep down into the heart of the nation. "It will be impossible to tell," wrote a friend, "how many will look back in after years to

Koviloor Digital Library

the teachings of the Swamis as a turning-point in their lives." In these six years one sees the growing influence of Oriental philosophy in America in the subjects comprised in courses of lectures, in sermons preached in some of the best known churches, in the publication of an increasing number of metaphysical and philosophical magazines, and in the rise of "New Thought" Societies,—all setting forth the principles and practices of Vedanta, under many names and in various ways. Thus, when the Swami left the shores of India the second time for the West, he did it with a satisfying consciousness of an ever-brightening prospect opening up before him. And though his visit was intended to be chiefly in search of health, he was again hurled into the vortex of intense activity, which was his nature,—for preaching and teaching was as vital a part of his life as the air he breathed.

Koviloor Digital Library

CXVI.

HOW THE MOVEMENT WENT.—II.

(WORKS OF SERVICE, 1897—JUNE 1899.)

Let us now turn our attention to another sphere of activity, which though humble is not a less important factor of the movement—the various humanitarian works undertaken by the Brotherhood to alleviate the wants and miseries of suffering humanity in India, starting with Bengal as a nucleus. The Ramakrishna Mission was established in 1897 especially with that avowed object. And though no organised work had been initiated by the Order before that, if one seeks for the germ of that power stimulated by which the conserved energy of the Brotherhood found vent in a loving spirit of service and of self-sacrifice, one has to turn his gaze further back into the past.

It is mentioned elsewhere how the passionate words of Swamiji, spoken in sympathy of the poor and the miserable to two of his *gurubhâis* at Mount Abu on the eve of his departure for America, were implanted in the heart of the Swami Akhandananda. Sometime after he had heard them, he fell ill and went for a change to Khetri, where thanks to the proper diet and treatment arranged for by the Maharajah himself, he recovered his health in about six months. As the result of his travelling in different places of the State and mixing freely with the rich and the poor, he realised more and more the truth of Swamiji's words, and with his permission and encouragement he launched into the field of action, taking the name of his Divine Master. He found that the cause of misery and poverty among the masses is the want of education, and hence he determined to devote himself to its dissemination.

At the time there was a High School in Khetri with only eighty boys on its roll and an incompetent staff of teachers. Going from house to house of the citizens, he

Koviloor Digital Library

impressed upon them the benefits of education and persuaded them to send their sons to the School. Like other States in Rajputana there were in Khetri five hundred families of *chelâs*, who were practically slaves. They were impressed into the service of a prince without any fee except for a small pittance in the shape of foodstuffs. At the time there were about twenty of these *dâs* boys engaged in the Rajah's office. At the earnest endeavours of the Swami Akhandananda all these boys were made free and admitted into the School. Their guardians had at first hesitated for fear of having their boys' doles of food stopped, when not in service; but through the monk's intercession they continued to get their food from the State as before. Thus the gathering of students went on, on the one hand,—the Swami overriding all opposition and obstacles,—till within a short time the number of students in the School rose to 257. On the other hand, the standard of teaching was made efficient by engaging the services of learned teachers from different places.

But the Swami Akhandananda's activities were not confined to the town alone. Going about from village to village he established five Lower Primary Schools. Shortly after, at the advice of the Swami Vivekananda, and satisfied with seeing the uniform progress of these schools, the Maharajah of Khetri sanctioned from the revenue of his State, an additional annual grant of Rupees five thousand for the education department. The local Sanskrit School was, by the Swami's effort also, converted into a Vedic School for teaching Yajur Veda. To meet the additional expenses of buying costly books, which were beyond the means of the students, the Swami at once opened a "Students' Philanthropic Fund," and within a short time collected Rupees three hundred, with which he bought the books required and these were distributed among the students through Colonel Pedo, the Political Agent.

Sometime after, in 1895, the Swami went to Nathdwara in Udaipur State for a brief stay, and there also after much labour started a Middle English School, and managed to

Koviloor Digital Library

conduct it for a time thanks to the help of an educated Bengalee youth. Besides these he established in Alwar and other States in Rajputana several associations for the culture of knowledge, in which religion, various branches of learning and many other subjects pertaining to the welfare of society were discussed.

The Swami Akhandananda's heart was always deeply moved by the wants and grievances of poor people, who also knowing him to be their sympathiser opened their hearts freely to him. On the occasion of the annual Durbar held at Khetri, he noticed that though a large sum of money was being presented as *nazar* to the Prince from them, they were not allowed to enter into the Durbar-hall to see their Rajah, and in their endeavour to do so were insulted and driven back by the guards. To remedy this injustice the Swami appeared before the Rajah and appealed to him in a touching manner on their behalf. As its result the noble Prince issued an order to the effect, that from the next year all his subjects without distinction would have the right of entreé into the Durbar. That this was carried into effect is evidenced from the fact that at the Durbar held when the Swami Vivekananda went to Khetri after his return from the West, all the subjects were allowed to come in turn and lay their offerings of money before their ruler while they bowed to him in obeisance.

Allusion has been made elsewhere to the famine-relief work conducted by the Swami Akhandananda in the District of Murshidabad with his exemplary zeal and self-sacrifice, which drew from the Government authorities praise and cordial co-operation. Moved by the helpless condition of deserted children in the course of his wanderings through affected villages, the Swami conceived the idea of starting an Orphanage and began his work with two little orphans in the August of 1897, at Mohula, the centre of his relief work. At the beginning of 1899, it was removed to Sargachi. Mr. E. V. Levinge, the then Magistrate and Collector of the District, and his successor, Mr. W. Egerton,

Koviloor Digital Library

convinced of the nobleness of the project and certain of the Swami's perseverance in making the orphan asylum a success, encouraged him with their full sympathy and helped him in every possible way. Subsequently three more orphans were sent to him by other Government officials, two were found within the District, and four Gurkha boys were brought from Darjeeling in 1898. This number increased gradually as days passed. With what affection and self-denial the Swami treated and looked after them! He was truly father, mother and teacher to them. Besides feeding, nursing and housing them, he devoted all his life-energy to educate them in various arts of usefulness, manual and intellectual, and to train them morally and spiritually, so that they may be helpful to themselves and to others, in short, to make *men* of them, in the full sense of the word. The institution, according to the Swami's ideas, should have, when fully organised and sufficiently provided for with funds, its school, library, collection of animals, scientific laboratory, agricultural, industrial and mercantile departments side by side with its systems of spiritual developments. Within two years of its inception he made, with the limited funds at his disposal, proper arrangements for teaching, in elementary English and the Vernacular, reading, writing and arithmetic, and also weaving, sewing, carpentery and sericulture. Orphans of any creed and caste were welcome, and they were given full freedom to keep to their respective faiths and practices. There happened to be two Mahommedan children there. The Swami taught all the boys to worship and pray. One who was the guest of the Ashrama Orphanage for a time, wrote to the *Brahmavadin* :—

"* * * It is a great pleasure to listen to the sincere, childlike but no less solemn way of the prayer of the Hindu boys, 'From the unreal lead us to the Real, from darkness lead us unto Light, from death lead us unto Immortality,' relieved here and there, in the interval, by the *La Allah Illalla* of the sister faith, with her two dear, young votaries in the next room."

The Swami Akhandananda has been ever since pushing on boldly with his self-imposed task, fighting against untold

Koviloor Digital Library

difficulties and hardships, with his health shattered under the strain. Of his acts of charity and loving service to the poor and the distressed, of his nursing the most virulent type of infectious cases disregarding his own life,—the tale is endless, and recalls the benign deeds of St. Francis of Assisi. Suffice it to say here, that if the Swami Vivekananda was the moving-spirit and inspirer of the ideal of Service to fellowmen among the Brotherhood, it was the Swami Akhandananda who was the first and foremost to catch it and to carry it out into practice. His life of self-sacrifice and philanthropy, his disinterested love and devotion, his energy and steadiness, his patience and endurance, and his indomitable spirit and courage are a lesson to one and all of his countrymen.

Another famine relief centre was opened in August 1897 at Dinajpur, where several deaths had occurred from starvation, under the management of the Swami Trigunatita, on a similar plan as in Murshidabad. He extended his help within two months to no less than eighty-four villages. His untiring and disinterested services attracted the attention of the Government, and the privilege accorded to the Swami Akhandananda of obtaining rice at a much reduced price was also given to him. The following extract from the Official Report of Mr. N. Bonham Carter, the Collector of Dinajpur, will show how the Swami's work was appreciated by the Government :—

"I cannot close my report without referring to the good work done by Swami Trigunatita, a member of the Ramakrishna Mission.....Here the Swami took up his abode in great discomfort, and distributed rice gratis to deserving cases. He made every endeavour to arrive at the truth and as far as he was able, made personal enquiries into the cases. He subsequently gave some relief in Dinajpur town itself.....Relief was given irrespective of caste and creed. Government relief work would be much relieved if more such unselfish work were done. I would add that the Swami managed the whole work himself without the assistance of myself or anyone else....."

At the end of the work a public meeting was convened on the third of December 1897 by the leading residents of the town to present an address of thanks to the Swami

Koviloor Digital Library

Trigunatita. Mr. N. Bonham Carter who presided, thanked the Swami and said among other things :—

"* * * I fully realise the Swami's good and disinterested work. He had nothing to bind him to this district. His only object was to dogood to mankind.....He did not depend on the officials for help, neither did he work in opposition to them. The Swami did everything himself and with his own hands. This is the secret of success in Self-Government. Self-Government consists in having work done and not having meetings only.....If we had more such men, I must say, we shall have more Self-Government.....I am glad to preside at this meeting, because though it is a small beginning yet it is a beginning of self-help in the right line. If there is the germ, it may grow up in time."

After the President had read the address of thanks, the Swami Trigunatita rose and spoke in reply very eloquently for two hours, dealing with the cause and remedy of famine. His lecture was much appreciated.

A third relief-centre was opened at Deoghur by the Swami Virajananda, about the same time and on the same lines as the others noted above. According to the report of the week ending the 22nd of October, two hundred and fifty men, women and children were being relieved daily from starvation. On the 29th of November some two hundred destitute people were provided with new clothes. Mr. H. H. Heard; the Sub-Divisional Officer of Deoghur, was pleased to preside at the distribution ceremony. In the course of his address he remarked as follows :—

"* * * The work done by the Ramakrishna Mission was being carried on, so nobly, silently and disinterestedly, that I had not even heard of its existence until I was invited to come and see it. It is an easy thing to come and see the distribution, but it is a hard task to go over all the villages and enquire in the huts of the poor to select the actually needy from imposters, to start an organisation and to carry on the work diligently throughout. The whole credit and thanks are, therefore, due to Swami Virajananda, the Sannyâsin who is the executive mover and worker of this noble undertaking. What struck me most was the system and the organisation of the movement....."

Besides these, centres of relief were also opened at Dakshineswar and Calcutta. It is a noteworthy fact in connection with the famine-relief work, that the friends and disciples of the Swamis in England and America were so

Koviloor Digital Library

much moved with reading the descriptions of the heart-rending distress that they convened meetings and sent liberal donations of help.

Mention has been made of the plans devised and arrangements completed by the Swami himself when the first epidemic of the bubonic plague broke out in Calcutta in May 1898, and when the panic-stricken people were either flying away from the city, or were contemplating riots and bloodshed to save, what they considered, the honour and the chastity of their women and their social integrity. When men of wealth and position, who had residences of their own outside the city or in the distant villages, had been running away without looking back to think what the poor middle-class householders were to do who had nowhere to go,—we have seen how on that day it was a Sannyâsin clad in *koupina*, who was thinking constantly of their welfare, aye, thinking even of selling the newly-bought grounds of the monastery to find the wherewithal of being of practical help to them!

When the plague appeared in Calcutta again in the next year, the Ramakrishna Mission plague service was promptly initiated on Good Friday, the 31st of March, under Swamiji's instructions, and did considerable work in a well-organised way. He himself came to live in a poor locality to inspire courage in the people and cheer up the workers. The whole management was placed in the hands of the Sister Nivedita as President and Secretary, the Swami Sadananda as the Officer-in chief, with the Swamis Shivananda, Nityananda and Atmananda as assistants. *Bustees*, or poor quarters, in four of the districts of the city were cleared of cart-loads of filth and congested matter and thoroughly disinfected with the help of scavengers under the direct supervision of the above-named Swamis.

A movement of a permanent value among the students was inaugurated by the stirring words of the Swami Vivekananda from the chair, on the occasion of the Sister Nivedita's address on "The Plague and the Duty of the Students", at the public meeting held in the Classic Theatre on April 21st.

Koviloor Digital Library

Fifteen students volunteered for service. They were formed into a band of helpers, for door-to-door inspection of huts in selected *bustees*, for the distribution of sanitary literature, and for quiet words of advice and counsel. They used to come together on Sundays at the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission, submit reports of their work to the Sister Nivedita, and receive instructions as regards their future work from her, till the epidemic subsided.

Another institution which grew at once into public favour and into huge proportions as a national festival since the return of Swamiji to India from the West, was that of the birthday anniversary celebration of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Barring the religious significance and features of the festival, the feeding of thousands and thousands of the poor that it gave occasion to, not only in the headquarters but in all the branch centres of the Order in the different provinces of the country, should not be left out of consideration. It is the worship of the Master, the worship of the image of God-in-man, in its true form.

This, in brief, is the record of public service done within two years and a half by the Ramakrishna Mission and the Brotherhood under the inspiration and guiding genius of the Swami Vivekananda. The estimate and the value of this kind of service are not to be gauged so much by the actual amount of work done, great though it was, as by the spirit of service and fellowship, of co-operation and unity infused into others to thrive and grow with ever-increasing force. That the Swami was supremely successful in bringing about this highly desired consummation, this New Spirit in his countrymen, is a fact which none can gainsay. And this is as it should be. For, the fountainhead from which flowed this perennial stream of loving-kindness to all beings, was exhaustless in its divine impulse, and as such could not but touch and bring out the divine humanity in man. In those days when famine raged with all its horrors, the dominating thought of the Swami was of the poor and miserable victims. The cry of the distressed seemed to pierce his heart with terrible agony. One who has

Koviloor Digital Library

seen him talk in these times on the ways and means of alleviating their sad lot, and of raising the masses, will have felt in his inmost soul what love he bore to his country and what sympathy he had for his countrymen in their distress. No father was ever more anxious for his helpless children than he for the sinking millions in India. We cannot close this chapter without mentioning two incidents illustrative of this point.

Once Pandit Sakharam Gonesh Deuskar, the late revered editor of the *Hitavadi*, came to see Swamiji with two of his friends. Having come to know from them that one of them belonged to the Punjab, Swamiji entered into conversation with him on the primary wants of that province, especially about the scarcity that was then prevailing there, and how they had to be met. The talk drifted on our duty to the masses in providing them with wide educational facilities tending to the betterment of their material and social conditions, and other allied subjects. Before taking departure, the Punjabi gentleman expressed his regret saying courteously, "Sir, with great expectations of hearing various teachings on religion we came to see you. But unfortunately our conversation turned on commonplace matters. The day has passed in vain!" Swamiji became at once grave and solemn and said, "Sir, so long as even a dog of my country remains without food, to feed and take care of him is my religion, and anything else is either non-religion or false religion!" All the three visitors were struck dumb by the Swami's reply. Years after the passing of the Swami, Mr. Deuskar in relating the incident to a disciple, told him that those words burnt into his soul making him realise, as never he had done before, what true patriotism was.

It was about the same time also that a Pandit of the Upper Provinces came to Swamiji to argue with him on the Vedanta philosophy. Swamiji was then sorely depressed at his helplessness in coping with the wide-spread famine. Without entering into a discussion on the Shâstras with the Sanskrit scholar, he told him, "Panditji, first of all you try to ameliorate the terrible distress that is prevailing everywhere,

Koviloor Digital Library

the heart-rending cry of your hungry countrymen for a morsel of food, and after that come to me to have a debate on Vedânta. To stake one's whole life and soul to save the thousands who are dying of starvation—this is the essence of the religion of Vedanta!"

"Verily, the austerities and self-tortures of the Hatha Yogi," as a lecturer has said, "pale into insignificance by the higher and nobler way shown to us by the great Swami Vivekananda—this laying of our lives as a sacrifice on the altar of humanity."

Koviloor Digital Library

CXVII.

HALF-WAY ACROSS THE WORLD.

On the twentieth of June, 1899, the Swami boarded the steamer *Golconda* and was off for the West. In the Bay of Bengal the sea was exceedingly rough. On the twenty-fourth the ship touched at Madras. Here a huge commotion had been raised, for the news of the Swami's coming there had been telegraphed on the day he left. But as Calcutta had been again infected with plague, the Indian passengers were not allowed to land. This caused serious disappointment to the whole city. A correspondent of the Madras "Hindu", speaking of the arrival of the ship there and the eagerness of the citizens to entertain the Swami, as they had done, before, wrote :—

"On Sunday morning the pier was crowded with an eager throng of spectators anxious to see the Swami Vivekananda, who was on his way to England by the S. S. *Golconda*. But to their great disappointment they were told that the vessel having arrived from Calcutta, an infected port, was under quarantine, and that the Swami would not be allowed to land. The numerous people who had gathered together, of all ranks and ages, had therefore to go away considerably vexed.

"Some there were who determined to have a glimpse at least of the Swami, and with that view they went in boats alongside the vessel, from whose deck the Swami was accorded a distant but cheerful welcome by his friends and admirers. Some days before, a public meeting was held at Castle Kernan under the presidency of the Hon'ble Mr. P. Ananda Charlu, at which it was resolved to address Government praying that the Swami Vivekananda be permitted to land at Madras, and stop there for a few hours before embarking again. Message after message was despatched to the Blue Heights, but the Swami's friends and admirers got only some vague replies, but no sanction was wired to the Port Health Officer and the result was that the Health Officer could not allow him to land. • • • • •"

Old friends and disciples of the Swami, such as Alasingha Perumal, Biligiri Aiyengar, G. G. Narasimhacharya, Dr.

Koviloor Digital Library

Nunjunda Rao, Singaravelu Mudaliar, Shyamier and Swami Ramakrishnananda and others came in boats alongside the steamer, bringing fruits, flowers and other offerings to the Swami, who greeted them from the railing of the deck, and talked to them until overcome with fatigue he had to bid them adieu. Alasingha Perumal, that devoted worker, was especially anxious to consult with the Swami concerning the management of the Brahmavadin magazine, and for this reason he purchased a ticket to Colombo. In the evening, as soon as the steamer raised its anchor and was leaving the port, tremendous farewell shouts were sent forth by thousands of Madrassi men and women, and boys and girls, who had assembled on the embankments of the harbour in that hour.

Colombo was reached on the fourth day after leaving Madras, the sea still being rough. And from a letter, written at that time by a distinguished Colombo resident, one gathers the following :—

"In spite of silly plague regulations the permit to land, which was refused Swamiji at Madras, was granted at Colombo, and much hospitality was shown by many kind friends. In the evening there was quite a demonstration in one house, and the adjoining street, and the shouts of praise to Shiva nearly deafened one. In spite of his European clothes, he was their Avatâr, and you could see by their dear, dear faces that they knew it."

On landing he was received with an ovation. He was glad to meet again his old friends, among them being Sir Coomaraswamy and Mr. Arunachalam. He visited Mrs. Higgin's Boarding School for Buddhist girls, and also the convent and school of his old acquaintance, the Countess Canovara.

The steamer left Colombo on the morning of the twenty-eighth of June. It was monsoon time and the ship tossed heavily all the way to Aden, which was reached in ten instead of the usual six days. At Socotra, the monsoon was the fiercest, this being its very centre, as the Captain remarked to the Swami. Beyond this point the sea was comparatively calm. The steamer reached Aden on the eighth of July and

Koviloor Digital Library

Suez, through the Red Sea and the Suez canal, on the fourteenth. After touching at Naples, it reached Marseilles, and the Swami was in London on the 31st of July.

All during the long voyage, the Swami was busy with the recital of the religious ideas of his own land and with observations upon human culture at large. Verily, for the Sister and the Swami's *gurubhâi*, this voyage was as a pilgrimage, and certainly an education. The Sister Nivedita has recorded in her work, "The Master As I Saw Him," some of the striking conversations of the Swami from her diary, and her impressions in her charming style. These being of absorbing interest to the readers of the Swami's life, as they show the Master in his various moods and thoughts, the biographers need make no apology for making the following lengthy quotations from them. Writes the Sister : —

"To this voyage of six weeks I look back as the greatest occasion of my life. I missed no opportunity of the Swami's society that presented itself, and accepted practically no other, filling up the time with quiet writing and needlework ; thus I received one long continuous impression of his mind and personality, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful.

"From the beginning of the voyage to the end, the flow of thought and story went on. One never knew what moment would see the flash of intuition, and hear the ringing utterance of some fresh truth. It was while we sat chatting in the River on the first afternoon that he suddenly exclaimed, 'Yes ! the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man ! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale !' And these words link themselves in my memory with those of another day, when I had been reminding him of the rareness of criminality in India. And he turned on me, full of sorrowful protest. 'Would to God it were otherwise in my land !' he said, 'for this is verily the virtuousness of death !' Stories of the Shivarâtri, or Dark Night of Shiva, of Prithvi Rai, of the Judgment-seat of Vikramaditya, of Buddha and Yashodhara, and a thousand more were constantly coming up. And a noticeable point was that one never heard the same thing twice. There was the perpetual study of caste ; the constant examination and restatement of ideas ; the talk of work, past, present, and future ; and, above all, the vindication of Humanity, never abandoned, never weakened, always rising to new heights of defence of the undefended, of chivalry for the weak. Our Master has come and he has gone, and in the priceless memory he has left with us who knew him, there is no other thing so great, as this his love of man.

Koviloor Digital Library

"I cannot forget his indignation when he heard some European reference to cannibalism, as if it were a normal part of life in some societies. 'That is not true !' he said, when he had heard to the end. 'No nation ever ate human flesh, save as a religious sacrifice, or in war, out of revenge. Don't you see ? that is not the way of gregarious animals ! It would cut at the root of social life !' Kropotkin's great work on 'Mutual Aid' had not yet appeared, when these words were said. It was his love of Humanity, and his instinct on behalf of each in his own place, that gave to the Swami so clear an insight.

"Again he talked of religious impulse. 'Sex-love and creation !' he cried, 'These are at the root of most religion. And these in India are called Vaishnavism, and in the West Christianity. How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali ! Let us worship Death ! Let us embrace the Terrible, because it is terrible ; not asking that it be toned down. Let us take misery, for misery's own sake !'

"As we came to the place where the river-water met the ocean,..... the Swami explained how it was the great reverence of Hindus for the ocean, forbidding them to defile it by crossing it, that had made such journeys equal to outcasting for so many centuries. Then, as the ship crossed the line, touching the sea for the first time, he chanted, 'Namo Shivâya ! Namo Shivâya ! .....'"

"He was talking again of the fact that he who would be great must suffer, and how some were fated to see every joy of the senses turn to ashes, and he said, 'The whole of life is only a swan-song !.....'

"Now he would answer a question, with infinite patience, and again he would play with historic and literary speculations. Again and again his mind would return to the Buddhist period, as the *crux* of a real understanding of Indian history.

" 'The three cycles of Buddhism,' he said one day, 'were five hundred years of the Law, five hundred years of images, and five hundred years of Tantras. You must not imagine that there was ever a religion in India called Buddhism, with temples and priests of its own order ! Nothing of the sort. It was always within Hinduism. Only at one time the influence of Buddha was paramount, and this made the nation monastic.' He had been discussing the question of the adoption into Buddhism, as its saints, of the Nâgs of Kashmir (the great serpents who were supposed to dwell within the springs), after the terrible winter that followed their deposition as deities.

"And he drifted on to talk about the Soma plant, picturing how for a thousand years after the Himalayan period, it was annually received in Indian villages as if it were a king, the people going out to meet it on a given day, and bringing it in rejoicing. And now it cannot even be identified !

Koviloor Digital Library

"Again it was Sher Shah of whom he talked,—Sher Shah making a thirty years' interim in the reign of Humayoon. I remember the accession of delight with which he began the subject, saying, 'He was once a boy, running about the streets of Bengal!' He ended by showing how the Grand Trunk Road from Chittagong to Peshawar, the Postal system, and the Government Bank, were all his work. And then there were a few minutes of silence, and he began reciting lines from the Guru Gita.....He was pursuing some train of thought within, to which these snatches of prayer bore some relation. A moment or two went by, and suddenly he broke his reverie saying, 'Yes, Buddha was right! It *must* be cause and effect in *Karma*. This individuality cannot but be an illusion!' It was the next morning, and I had supposed him to be dozing in his chair, when he suddenly exclaimed, 'Why! the memory of one life is like millions of years of confinement, and they want to wake up the memory of many lives! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!'

"'I have just been talking to Turiyananda about conservative and liberal ideas', he said as he met me on deck before breakfast one morning, and straightway plunged into the subject.

"'The conservative's whole ideal is *submission*. Your ideal is struggle. Consequently it is *we* who enjoy life, and never you! You are always striving to change yours to something better, and before a millionth part of the change is carried out, you die. The Western ideal is, to be doing: the Eastern, to be suffering. The perfect life would be a wonderful harmony between doing and suffering. But that can never be.

"'In our system it is accepted that a man can never have all he desires. Life is subjected to many restraints. This is ugly, yet it brings out points of light and strength. Our liberals see only the ugliness, and try to throw it off. But they substitute something quite as bad, and the new custom takes as long as the old, for us to work to its centres of strength.

"'Will is not strengthened by change. It is weakened and enslaved by it. But we must be always absorbing. Will grows stronger by absorption. And consciously or unconsciously, will is the one thing in the world that we admire. *Suttee* is great in the eyes of the whole world, because of the will that it manifests.

"'It is selfishness that we must seek to eliminate! I find that whenever I have made a mistake in my life, it has always been because *self* entered into the calculation. Where self has not been involved, my judgment has gone straight to the mark.

"'Without this self, there would have been no religious systems. If man had not wanted anything for himself, do you think he would have had all this praying and worship? Why! he would never have thought of God at all, except perhaps for a little praise now and then, at

Koviloor Digital Library

the sight of a beautiful landscape or something. And that is the only attitude there ought to be. All praise and thanks. If only we were rid of self!

" 'You are quite wrong', he said again, 'when you think that fighting is a sign of growth. It is not so at all. Absorption is the sign. Hinduism is the very genius of absorption. We have never cared for fighting. Of course we could strike a blow now and then, in defence of our homes! That was right. But we never cared for fighting for its own sake. Everyone had to learn that. So let these races of new comers whirl on! They'll all be taken into Hinduism in the end!'

"He never thought of his Mother-Church or his Motherland except as dominant; and again and again, when thinking of definite schemes, he would ejaculate, in his whimsical way, 'Yes, it is true! If European men or women are to work in India, it *must* be under the black man!'

"He brooded much over the national achievement. 'Well! Well!' he would say, 'We have done one thing that no other people ever did. We have converted a whole nation to one or two ideas. Non-beef-eating for instance. Not one Hindu eats beef. No, no!'—turning sharply round—'it is not at all like European non-cat-eating; for beef was formerly the food of the country!'

"We were discussing a certain opponent of his own, and I suggested that he was guilty of putting his sect above his country. 'That is Asiatic,' reported the Swami warmly, 'and it is grand! Only he had not the brain to conceive, nor the patience to wait!' and then he went off into a musing on Kali. • • •

" 'I love terror for its own sake,' he went on, 'despair for its own sake, misery for its own sake. Fight always. Fight and fight on, though always in defeat. That's the ideal. That's the ideal.'

" 'The totality of all souls, not the human alone,' he said once, 'is the Personal God. The will of the Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as Law. And this is what we mean by Shiva and Kali and so on.'

"Some of the most beautiful scenes in the world have been made for me more beautiful, by listening, in their midst, to these long soliloquies.

"It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. 'Messina must thank *me*!' he said, 'It is I who give her all her beauty!'

"Then he talked of the fever of longing to reach God, that had wakened in him as a boy, and of how he would begin repeating a text

Koviloor Digital Library

before sunrise, and remain all day repeating it, without stirring. He was trying here to explain the idea of *tapasyá*, in answer to my questions, and he spoke of the old way of lighting four fires, and sitting in the midst, hour after hour, with the sun overhead, reining in the mind. 'Worship the terrible!' he ended, 'Worship Death! All else is vain. All struggle is vain. That is the last lesson. Yet this is not the coward's love of death, not the love of the weak, or the suicide. It is the welcome of the strong man, who has sounded everything to its depths, and *knows* that there is no alternative.'"

Often during the voyage the Swami talked of those saints whom he had known personally. Paramount was Sri Ramakrishna of whom he told, among many other things, how with but a touch he could impart the highest insight, as instanced in the case of the lad who never spoke, the remaining ten years of his life, save to say, "My Beloved! My Beloved!" after being touched by the Master's hand. And he spoke also of a certain woman who on being offered salutation by the Master in the name of the Mother, by throwing flowers on her feet and burning incense before her, passed immediately into the deepest Samadhi, from which it was most difficult to recall her to sense-consciousness until two or three hours had elapsed. Before she left,

"None had the forethought to make a single enquiry as to her name or abode. She never came again. Thus her memory became like some beautiful legend treasured in the Order as witness to the worship of Sri Ramakrishna for gracious and noble wifehood and motherhood. Had he not said of this woman, 'a fragment of the Eternal Madonnahood'?....'Was it a joke,' the Swami said, 'that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa should touch a life? *Of course* he made new men and new women of those who came to him, even in these fleeting contacts!'

"And then he would tell story after story of different disciples. How one came, and came again, and struggled to understand. And suddenly to this one he turned and said, 'Go away now, and make some money! Then come again!' And that man to-day was succeeding in the world, but the old love was proving itself ever alight."

The Swami spoke with great feeling of Nag Mahashaya, who had paid him a visit in Calcutta only a few weeks before his departure. Nag Mahashaya, he said again and again, was "one of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa." He related how on one occasion he had cut down the ridge-

Koviloor Digital Library

pole of his cottage, in order to make the fire to cook food for a guest.

Speaking of the modern saints of Hindusthan, such as Pavhari Baba, Trailanga Swami, Raghunath Das and others, as also of those of ancient times,

"His whole soul went to the interpretation of each, as he rose before him, and it would have been impossible at any moment for the listener to think of any other as higher. * * *

"Raghunath Das had been dead two months, when the Swami reached his Ashrama. He had been a soldier originally in the British service, and as an outpost sentinel was faithful and good, and much beloved by his officers. One night, however, he heard a Rama-Rama party. He tried to do his duty, but 'Jaya Bolo Rama Chandra Ki Jaya !' maddened him. He threw away his arms and uniform, and joined the worship.

"This went on for some time, till reports came to the Colonel. He sent for Raghunath Das, and asked him whether these were true, and if he knew the penalty. Yes, he knew it. It was to be shot. 'Well,' said the Colonel, 'Go away this time, and I shall repeat it to no one. This once I forgive you. But if the same thing happens again, you must suffer the penalty.'

"That night, however, the sentinel heard again the Rama-Rama party. He did his best, but it was irresistible. At last he threw all to the winds, and joined the worshippers till morning. Meanwhile, however, the Colonel's trust in Raghunath Das had been so great that he found it difficult to believe anything against him, even on his own confession. So in the course of the night, he visited the outpost, to see for himself. Now, Raghunath Das was in his place, and exchanged the word with him three times. Then, being assured, the Colonel turned in, and went to sleep.

"In the morning, appeared Raghunath Das to report himself and surrender his arms. But the report was not accepted, for the Colonel told him what he had himself seen and heard. Thunderstruck, the man insisted by some means on retiring from the service. Rama it was Who had done this for His servant. Henceforth, in very truth, he would serve no other.

"'He became a Vairagi', said the Swami, 'on the banks of the Saraswati. People thought him ignorant, but I knew his power. Daily he would feed thousands. Then would come the grain-seller, after a while, with his bill. 'H'm !' Raghunath Das would say, 'A thousand rupees you say ? Let me see. It is a month I think since I have received anything. This will come, I fancy, to-morrow.' And it always came.' * * * *

Koviloor Digital Library

"And then, perhaps came the story of Shibi Rana. 'Ah, Yes!' exclaimed the teller, as he ended, 'these are the stories that are deep in our nation's heart! Never forget that the Sannyasin takes two vows, one to realise the truth, and one to help the world, and that the most stringent of stringent requirements is that he should renounce any *thought* of heaven!'"

One day the talk drifted into the question, what becomes of those who failed to keep their vows. Quoting the memorable *slokas* of the Gita on the point,—

"First he explained how everything, short of the absolute control of mind, word, and deed, was but 'the sowing of wild oats.' Then he told how the religious who failed would sometimes be born again to a throne, 'there to sow his wild oats', in gratifying that particular desire which had led to his downfall. 'A memory of the religious habit', he said, 'often haunts the throne.' For one of the signs of greatness was held to be the persistence of a faint memory. Akbar had had this memory. He thought of himself as a *Brahmacharin* who had failed in his vows. But he would be born again, in more favourable surroundings, and that time he would succeed. And then there came one of those personal glimpses which occurred so seldom with our Master. Carried away with the talk of memory, he lifted the visor for a moment, on his own soul. 'And whatever you may think,' he said, turning to me suddenly, and addressing me by name, 'I have such a memory!.....'"

Being questioned what charity means, he explained it according as it is divided into three kinds in the Gita, namely, the Tâmasic, the Râjasic, and the Sâtvic. "His voice," to resume the Sister Nivedita's narrative,

"sank into silence, and we sat looking out over the star-lit sea. Then he took up the thread again. 'As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sidney greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others, even in the moment of death.

"'But anyone will be great in a great position! Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the footlights. The world looks on. Whose heart will not throb? Whose pulse will not quicken, till he can do his best? More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, doing its duty silently, steadily, from moment to moment, and hour to hour.'

"How many points on the map have received a new beauty in my eyes, from the conversations they recall! As we passed up the coast of Italy, we talked of the Church. As we went through the Straits of

Koviloor Digital Library

Bonifacio, and sat looking at the south coast of Corsica, he spoke in a hushed voice of 'this land of the birth of the War-Lord,' and wandered far afield, to talk of the strength of Robespierre, or to touch on Victor Hugo's contempt for Napoleon III, with his '*Et tu* Napoleon !'

"As I came on deck, on the morning of our passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, he met me with the words, 'Have you seen them? Have you seen them ? Landing there and crying, '*Din ! Din !*' 'The Faith ! The Faith !' And for half-an-hour I was swept away into his dramatisation of the Moorish invasions of Spain.

"Or again, on a Sunday evening, he would sit and talk of Buddha, putting new life into the customary historical recital of bare facts, and interpreting the Great Renunciation as it had appeared to him who made it.

"But his talks were not all entertaining, nor even all educational. Every now and then he would return, with consuming eagerness, to the great purpose of his life. And when he did this, I listened with an anxious mind, striving to treasure up each word that he let fall. For I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dreams.

"One of these occasions came on a certain evening, as we neared Aden. I had asked him, in the morning, to tell me, in broad outline, what he felt to be the points of difference between his own schemes for the good of India, and those preached by others. It was impossible to draw him out on this subject. On the contrary, he expressed appreciation of certain personal characteristics and lines of conduct, adopted by some of the leaders of other schools, and I regarded the question as dismissed. Suddenly, in the evening, he returned to the subject of his own accord.

" 'I disagree with all those,' he said, 'who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. *My* hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within.

" 'So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea—*Strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedanta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was of Non-resistance or Non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now, I will make all injury like that. Strength and

Koviloor Digital Library

fearlessness ! My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke his silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And thou also art He!'

" 'But you may ask—What is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme? He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method ! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England, or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life,—and I read the meaning. Never a word of condemnation for any ! Once I had been attacking one of our sects of Diabolists. I had been raving on for three hours, and he had listened quietly. 'Well, well!' said the old man as I finished, 'perhaps every house may have a back door. Who knows !'

" 'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—Renunciation and Mukti. Only Mukti here ! Nothing for the householders ! But these are the very people whom I want to help. For, are not all souls of the same quality ? Is not the goal of all the same ?

" 'And so strength must come to the nation through education.'

"I thought at the time, and I think increasingly as I consider it, that this one talk of my Master, had been well worth the whole voyage, to have heard. * * * .

" The Swami was constantly preoccupied with the thought of Hinduism as a whole, and this fact found recurring expression in references to Vaishnavism.....

He loved to dwell on the spectacle of the historical emergence of Hinduism. He sought constantly for the great force *behind* the evolution of any given phenomenon. Where was the thinker behind the founder of a religion ? And where, on the other hand, was the heart to complete the thought ? Buddha had received his philosophy of the five categories —form, feeling, sensation, motion, knowledge,—from Kapila. But Buddha had brought the love that made the philosophy live. Of no one of these, Kapila had said, can anything be declared. For each *is* not. It but was, and is gone. 'Each is but the ripple on the waters. Know, oh man ! thou art the sea'.

"Krishna, in his turn, as the preacher and creative centre of popular Hinduism, awoke in the Swami a feeling which was scarcely second to his passionate, personal adoration of Buddha. Compared to His many-sidedness, the Sannyasa of Buddha was almost a weakness. How wonderful was the Gita !.....How strong ! But besides this, there was the beauty of it. The Gita, after the Buddhist writings, was such a relief ! Buddha had constantly said, 'I am for the People !' And they had crushed, in His name, the vanity of art and learning. The great mistake committed by Buddhism lay in the destruction of the old.

Koviloor Digital Library

" For the Buddhist books were torture to read. Having been written for the ignorant, one would find only one or two thoughts in a huge volume. (The Dhammapada he placed, however, on a level with the Gita). It wast o meet the need thus roused, that the Puranas were intended. There had been only one mind in India that had foreseen this need, that of Krishna, probably the greatest man who ever lived. He recognises at once the need of the People, and the desirability of preserving all that had already been gained. Nor are the Gopi story and the Gita (which speaks of women and Sudras) the only forms in which he reached the masses. For the whole Mahabharata (as also the Bhagavata) is his, carried out by his worshippers, and it begins with the declaration that it is for the People.

" 'Thus is created a religion that ends in the worship of Vishnu, as the preservation and enjoyment of life, leading to the realisation of God. Our last movement, Chaitanyaism, you remember, was for enjoyment. (The Swami was characterising the doctrine here ; he was not speaking of the unsurpassed personal asceticism of Chaitanya). At the same time, Jainism represents the other extreme, the slow destruction of the body by self-torture. Hence Buddhism, you see, is reformed Jainism, and this is the real meaning of Buddha's leaving the company of the five ascetics. In India, in every age, there is a cycle of sects, which represents every gradation of physical practice, from the extreme of self-torture to the extreme of excess. And during the same period will always be developed a metaphysical cycle, which represents the realisation of God as taking place by every gradation of means, from that of using the senses as an instrument, to that of the annihilation of the senses. Thus Hinduism always consists, as it were, of two counter-spirals, completing each other, round a single axis.

" 'Yes ! Vaishnavism says : It is all right ! This tremendous love for father, for mother, for brother, husband or child ! It is all right, if only you will think that Krishna is the child, and when you give him food, that you are feeding Krishna ! This was the cry of Chaitanya. 'Worship God through the senses !' as against that Vedantic cry, 'Control the senses ! Suppress the senses!'

" 'At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion—the Orthodox, the Arya Samaj, and the Brahmo Samaj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samaj corresponds with Jainism, and the Brahmo Samaj with the Buddhists.

" 'I see that India is a young and living organism. Europe also is young and living. Neither has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticise its institutions. They are two great experiments, neither of which is yet complete. In India, we have

Koviloor Digital Library

social communism, with the light of Advaita—that is, spiritual individualism—playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism. Thus the one consists of social institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought, while the other is made up of individualist institutions, within the hedge of communistic thought.

"'Now we must help the Indian experiment as it is. Movements which do not attempt to help things as they are, are, from that point of view, no good. In Europe, for instance, I respect marriage as highly as non-marriage. Never forget that a man is made great and perfect as much by his faults as by his virtues. So we must not seek to rob a nation of its character, even if it could be proved that that character was all faults.

"His mind was extraordinarily clear on the subject of what he meant by individualism. How often has he said to me, 'You do not yet understand India! We Indians are *Man*-worshippers, after all! Our God is man!' He meant here the great individual man, the man of Self-realisation,—Buddha, Krishna, the Guru, the Mahâpurusha. But on another occasion, using the same word in an entirely different sense, he said, 'This idea of man-worship (that is to say, the worship of the manhood which exists in any man, in all men, apart from their individual achievement of thought or character, humanity) exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been expanded. You must develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Establish the worship of the feet of beggars, as you had it in Mediæval Europe. Make man-worshippers.'

"He was equally clear, again, about the value of the image. 'You may always say,' he said, 'that the Image is God. The error you have to avoid, is to think God the image.' He was appealed to, on one occasion, to condemn the fetichism of the Hottentot. 'I do not know,' he answered, 'what fetichism is!' A lurid picture was hastily put before him, of the object alternately worshipped, beaten and thanked. 'I do that!' he exclaimed. 'Don't you see', he went on, a moment later, in hot resentment of injustice done to the lowly and absent, 'Don't you see that there is no fetichism? Oh, your hearts are steeled, that you cannot see that the child is right! The child sees persons everywhere. Knowledge robs us of the child's vision. But at last, through higher knowledge, we win back to it. He connects a living power with rocks, sticks, trees, and the rest. And is there not a living Power behind them? It is *symbolism*, not fetichism! Can you not see?'

"But while every sincere ejaculation was thus sacred to him, he never forgot for a moment the importance of the philosophy of Hinduism. And he would throw perpetual flashes of poetry into the illustration of such arguments as are known to lawyers. How lovingly he would

Koviloor Digital Library

dwell upon the Mimânsaka philosophy! With what pride he would remind the listener that, according to Hindu *Savants*, 'the whole universe is only *the meaning of words*. After the word comes the thing. Therefore, the idea is all!' And indeed, as he expounded it, the daring of the Mimânsakâ argument, the fearlessness of its admissions, and the firmness of its inferences, appeared as the very glory of Hinduism.....One day he told the story of Satyabhâmâ's sacrifice and how the word 'Krishna,' written on a piece of paper, and thrown into the balances, made Krishna Himself, on the other side, kick the beam. 'Orthodox Hinduism,' he began, 'makes *Sruti*, the sound, everything. The *thing* is but a feeble manifestation of the pre-existing and eternal Idea. So the *name* of God is everything: God Himself is merely the objectification of that idea in the eternal mind. Your own name is infinitely more perfect than the person, you! The name of God is greater than God. Guard you your speech!' Surely there has never been another religious system so fearless of truth! As he talked, one saw that the whole turned on the unspoken conviction, self-apparent to the Oriental mind, that religion is not a creed, but an experience; a process, as the Swami himself has elsewhere said, of being and becoming. If it be true that this process leads inevitably from the apprehension of the manifold to the realisation of the One, then it must also be true that everything is in the mind, and that the material is nothing more than the concretising of ideas. Thus the Greek philosophy of Plato is included within the Hindu philosophy of the Mimânsakas, and a doctrine that sounds merely empiric on the lips of Europe finds reason and necessity, on those of India. In the same way, as one declaring a truth self-evident, he exclaimed, on one occasion, "I would not worship even the Greek gods, for they were separate from humanity! Only those should be worshipped who are like ourselves, but greater. The difference between the gods and me must be a difference only of degree.

"But his references to philosophy did not by any means always consist of these epicurean tit-bits. He was merciless, as a rule, in the demand for intellectual effort, and would hold a group of unlearned listeners through an analysis of early systems, for a couple of hours at a stretch, without suspecting them of weariness or difficulty. . . .

"Nor would Western speculations pass forgotten in this great restoration of the path the race had come by. For his was a mind which saw only the seeking, pursuing enquiry of man, making no arbitrary distinction as between ancient and modern. . . ."

In this way he would run over all the six systems of Hindu philosophy, analysing, comparing, reconciling one with the other, and showing their points of difference with Buddhism. Thus he dwelt long and minutely on the

Koviloor Digital Library

Vaisheshika and the Nyâya the philosophy in particular, side by side with that of the Vedanta, and of Kant. He concluded by saying :—

"'One set of persons, you see, gives priority to the external manifestation, the other to the internal idea. Which is prior, the bird to the egg, or the egg to the bird ! Does the oil hold the cup, or the cup the oil ? This is a problem of which there is no solution. Give it up ! Escape from Maya !'"

But the Swami was not occupied most of the time with serious talks and problems. Free from obligations of public life, he was often jovial, and gave himself up to fun and merriment with his *gurubhâi* and his disciple. He enjoyed the long sea-voyage as one to whom the experience was as if new. As promised to the editor of the *Udbodhan*, he whiled away some of his quiet hours in writing Bengalee articles for the paper. These were for the greater part penned in the most delightful and humorous style, interspersed here and there with serious and instructive thoughts, both secular and spiritual. These contributions have been later on collected and made into a book called, "*Parivrajaka*" or "The Itinerant Monk." This is, indeed, from one point of view, a singular production, being in its nature untranslatable keeping to its native spirit, and shows that he could have been very well, the Mark Twain of the Bengalee literature if he had so wished.

Thus passed the time, until on the thirty-first of July the party arrived in London, to be met on landing at the Tilbury Dock by many friends and disciples of the Swami. Among them, much to his surprise, were two American ladies who had come all the way from Detroit to meet him in London, having seen in an Indian magazine that he would sail from India on the twentieth of June, and especially because they were alarmed at the reports they had heard regarding his health. One of these, Mrs. Funke, describing his appearance, says : "He had grown very slim and looked and acted like a boy. He was so happy to find the voyage had brought back some of the old strength and vigour. * * *"

It being the out-of-season period in London, the Swami remained but two weeks in Wimbledon, a suburb of the

Koviloor Digital Library

metropolis, where quarters were found in a roomy old-fashioned house. It was very quiet and restful, and all spent a happy time there. With the exception of several conversations, the Swami did no public work in London at this time. On the sixteenth of August, acceding to the many invitations which constantly reached him from America, he left London, accompanied by the Swami Turiyananda and his American disciples. Of the voyage across the Atlantic, Mrs. Funke has written :—

".....These were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean. Reading and exposition of the Gita occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight, stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. 'And if all this Maya is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the Reality behind it !' he would exclaim.

"One especially fine evening when the moon was at the full and softly mellow and golden, a night of mystery and enchantment, he stood silently for a long time drinking in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly he turned to us and said : 'Why recite poetry when there,' pointing to sea and sky, 'is the very essence of poetry ?'

"We reached New York all too soon, feeling that we never could be grateful enough for those blessed, intimate ten days with our Guru....."

Koviloor Digital Library

CXVIII.

THE SPREADING OF VEDANTA IN CALIFORNIA.

The very afternoon of his arrival in New York from Glasgow, after visiting the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami with his *gurubhâi* accompanied them to their beautiful country-home called Ridgley Manor, on the Hudson, in the Catskill mountains, about one hundred and fifty miles from New York. He waited there "for the leading that he confidently expected, to show him where his next effort was to lie." A month later he was joined there by the Sister Nivedita. The hosts with their family were devoted to Swamiji, who was much better, but felt unwell now and then. He was there under the treatment of a famous osteopath. He remained in this country-retreat until the fifth of November, and through the lovingcare of his friends he was soon on the way to much betterment in health. His presence was a constant delight to his hosts, and his mind reverted to many interesting experiences of his former stay in America.

Swami Abhedananda who had been away from New York on a lecturing tour at the time of the Swami's arrival, was soon wired to by him to come and meet him at his retreat, in order to report concerning the New York work. The former stayed with him for ten days, and it was with great satisfaction that the Swami learned from him that the Vedanta Society had now acquired permanent quarters. On the fifteenth of October the "Vedanta Society Rooms" were formally opened by the Swami Abhedananda, who held regular classes there from the twenty-second. An American Brahmachârini writes concerning Swamiji at the time :—

"It is already three weeks since Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda reached America from England. Swami Vivekananda is rapidly recovering from all indisposition, and for the gain made in health during the voyage from India to England, is daily adding renewed

Koviloor Digital Library

vigour. The few chosen ones who have heard the Swami in easy home-talks since his arrival, are deeply impressed with the great message of truth he bears ;—a larger and fuller prophecy are vision than any he has yet given to the East or West. Swami Turiyananda is beloved by all who meet him and is heartily welcomed as a needed teacher. Happy and blessed are we by their presence. .....Swami Vivekananda is resting quietly in the home of loving friends, where Swami Turiyananda also is, together with Swami Abhedananda. Swami Turiyananda has endeared himself to all who have met him, and his work is opening out to him in a hearty welcome from students of Vedanta, eager for his teaching....."

And soon work did open out for the newly-arrived Swami Turiyananda. He is seen a few weeks later in Mont Clair, a short distance from New York, where he regularly taught, and gave moral instructions to the children of the place that joined his classes, by means of stories and with readings from the "Hitopadesha" and other books of Indian wisdom. He also lectured regularly at the Vedanta Society Rooms, co operating in the work of Swami Abhedananda. Later on, in December, he went to Cambridge, Mass., and did much valuable work there. On the tenth of December, he read a paper on "Sankarâchârya," before the Cambridge Conference. The Professors of the Harvard University and many other learned men spoke in high terms of it.

The first appearance of the Swami Vivekananda in New York was on Tuesday, the eighth of November. He was introduced to many new members by the Swami Abhedananda. On that very night, at their earnest request he assumed charge of an ordinary meeting of the Society, and the evening was devoted to a question-and-answer class. On the tenth he was given a public reception, in the library of the Vedanta Society, at which many of his New York friends of former days gathered to meet their beloved teacher again, and greeted him with unfeigned delight. There was also present a large number of those who had been attracted by his name, or who had read his works, and had long desired to see him personally. An address of welcome was presented to him by his early friends, to which the Swami replied suitably, making

Koviloor Digital Library

it plain to all that his heart was flowing with love and good-will to them. The Swami received them all with great joy and mixed freely in their company.

After a fortnight's stay in New York, during which he paid a few visits to the neighbouring towns, the Swami left on the twenty-second of November for California. At the earnest solicitation of his devoted friends and admirers in Chicago he broke his journey at that place, where his name had become a household word on the American continent, and from where the echoes of the great ovation he had received at the Parliament of Religions travelled to distant India itself, making him a world-figure.

At Chicago the Swami attended several receptions held in his honour. He again met large numbers of people who had known him in the time of the Parliament. It was a great delight to him to find how many, who had not even seen him, had been attracted to his teaching and had gained a great understanding by reading his books. Moreover, because of this, there were many who were filled with a great reverence for India and Indian things. Here, also, he visited several outlying suburbs where he was entertained at dinner or at receptions by various distinguished persons. The Swami reached California in the first days of December and did not return to New York until June the seventh of the following year.

The Swami's immediate destination was Los Angeles which he reached *via* the Sunset Route, Southern Pacific R. R. and where he immediately became the guest of Mrs. Blodgett who was delighted to receive him. Miss MacLeod and her brother were also at the time the guests of the same lady, who moved in quiet and distinguished intellectual circles. Many were the mornings and evenings when he entertained the family with sometimes amusing and sometimes religious discourses. And in the small hours of every morning they would hear his voice reciting some Vedic *sloka* or religious hymn. He remained in Los Angeles until towards the middle of February. Shortly after his arrival there, he found himself

Koviloor Digital Library

again surrounded by numerous persons eager to see the Teacher with whose religious writings they had already become acquainted. Invitations pressed in upon him. So he found himself compelled to give a series of lectures, the first of which was delivered on December 8, in Blanchard Hall, the subject being the Vedanta Philosophy. The next lecture, "The Cosmos", was given at Amity Church under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of Southern California. Several other lectures were delivered in public halls in Los Angeles, among them being, "Work and Its Secret," (January 4, 1900), (*Vide*, "Complete Works," page 239); "Powers of the Mind", (January 8), (*Vide*, *Ibid*, page 244); and "The Open Secret," (*Vide*, *Ibid*. page 450). He also delivered some of his best lectures in the adjacent town of Pasadena, notably in the Universalist Church and in the Shakespeare Club. The lectures which proved to be most popular were, "Christ The Messenger" (*Vide*, "Complete Works," page 813), and "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion" (*Vide Ibid*, p. 431), delivered to huge audiences. He gave several noteworthy addresses on "The Epics of Ancient India." before the Shakespeare Club, a select society, which had specially invited him. Among others, the subjects of this series were (on 31st of January), "The Ramayana", (on 1st of February) "The Mahabharata, "The Story of Jada Bharata", and "The Story of Prahlad." (*Vide*, "Complete Works," pp. 777-803). On the 3rd of February he also gave before the same club his lecture on "The Great Teachers of the World" (*Vide*, *Ibid*, page 804). In fact, between Los Angeles and Pasadena, a distance of ten miles, he had to deliver, at the earnest request of the public, one lecture every day during his stay there. It seemed as if much of the old spirit of work had come back to the Swami. Happily, the climate proved to be most congenial to his health and he worked at his best.

At the special request of an association known as the "Home of Truth," he spent nearly a month at its headquarters in Los Angeles, and held many classes there. At the Home of Truth several public lectures were arranged for the Swami

Koviloor Digital Library

at which on each occasion more than a thousand people attended. He spoke much in these days of "Applied Psychology" and found that Californians were particularly ready in understanding the "Raja Yoga" path of the spiritual life. Many of the members of the Home of Truth became the Swami's ardent followers. His simple manners, his great intellectuality, and above all, his towering spirituality completely won them over. It was according to a rule of their organisation that tobacco was tabooed. But in the Swami's case this rule was allowed to be overlooked, because their love for him was beyond measure. The sect was much akin to Christian Science, and was therefore exceedingly interested in his remarks concerning the overcoming of the body-bondages and ailments through mental and spiritual processes. They loved his perfect personal freedom in his dealings with them. He was always the same sweet personality, now humorous, now grave, "but always about him shone the Light of God."

At Los Angeles he was for a time the guest of Miss Spencer, who became one of his fervent disciples. While there he was wont to sit on the floor beside her aged mother who was blind and nearing the end. At Miss Spencer's question, why he seemed so interested in her mother, he told her that death like birth was a mystery, and so was an interesting study to him. When the body approaches dissolution, the sense-activities are stilled as the soul gradually passes to the life beyond. This state so sad and repulsive to the mind limited to external appearance was, to the Swami's spiritual insight, pregnant with interest and significance!

The magazine, "Unity", describing his work in Los Angeles, speaks as folllows :—

"* * * Hindu missionaries are not among us to convert us to a better religion than what Christ gave us, but rather in the name of religion itself, to show us that there is in reality but one Religion, and that we can do no better than to put into practice what we profess to believe. We had eight lectures at the Home by the Swami Vivekananda, and all were intensely interesting. * * * * There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda the learning of a university-president, the dignity of an

Koviloor Digital Library

archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free and natural child. Getting upon the platform without a moment's preparation, he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing conditions in Christian countries to-day, whose people go and seek to reform the Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, or in South Africa allow children of the same Father to cut each other to pieces. In contrast to this condition of things, he described what took place during the last great famine in India where men would die of starvation beside their cattle (cows) rather than stretch forth a hand to kill....."

When the Swami left Los Angeles it was to become the guest of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Fay Mills of Oakland, at whose church, the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, he gave eight lectures to crowded audiences numbering often as many as two thousand persons ; and the mornings following, he would find his name blazoned in all the leading papers of the State. These lectures were given on the occasion of a local Congress of Religions that was being held at the time in the Rev. B. F. Mills' church, and thus hundreds of prominent Californian clergymen had the opportunity of meeting the Swami in an exchange of ideas, and in many instances, were converted to his spiritual outlook. In a lecture before this gathering, the Rev. Dr. Mills speaking on "The Hindu Way of Salvation", introduced the Swami in terms of highest praise, describing him as, "a man of gigantic intellect, indeed, one to whom our greatest university professors were as mere children."

The impression which the Swami was making was indeed enormous. A great stir was created in the leading intellectual circles of this large State. And finally, in the latter part of February, at the request of numerous distinguished residents of the adjoining city of San Francisco, the capital of the State of California, the Swami went there and worked strenuously till the month of May. His first lecture was on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," delivered at the Golden Gate Hall, where he received a tremendous ovation. He was induced to take spacious quarters in Tucker Street so that he

Koviloor Digital Library

might open private classes for the benefit of numerous interested persons. Here he commenced regular training classes in Raja Yoga and meditation, and here also he gave semi-public lectures on the Gita and the Vedanta Philosophy in general. He had come to this State, practically unknown to the public at large, except in the memory of a considerable number of newspaper readers who recalled his name in connection with the reports of his lectures at the time of the Parliament of Religions. Of course, in ecclesiastical circles all over the United States his name was widely known.

Every Sunday during the months of March and April, the Swami spoke publicly in San Francisco, at Red Men's Hall, Golden Gate Hall, and at Union Square Hall. Three evening lectures per week were also given at Washington Hall, and later at the Social Hall he gave a short series of lectures on Bhakti Yoga. Besides these, on alternate evenings he lectured at Alameda and Oakland. The subjects of some of his Sunday public lectures given in San Francisco were, "Buddha's Message to the World," "The Religion of Arabia and Mahomet, the Prophet," "Is the Vedanta Philosophy the Future Religion?" "Christ's Message to the World," "Mahomet's Message to the World," "Krishna's Message to the World," on March the eighteenth, April the first, eighth, fifteenth, twenty-second and twenty-ninth respectively. In March the following lectures on week-days were given at Washington Hall: "The Mind and Its Powers and Possibilities", "Mind Culture," "Concentration of the Mind," "Nature and Man", "Soul and God", "The Goal", and "Science of Breathing," on the thirteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, eighteenth, twentieth, twenty-third, twenty-seventh and twenty-ninth of the month respectively. In April, at the same hall he continued his lectures on week-days speaking on "Meditation", "The Practice of Religion, Breathing and Meditation", "The Worshipped and Worshipper", and "Formal Worship", on the third, fifth, ninth, and tenth of the month respectively. "Art and Sciences in India" was the topic on which he addressed the audience at Wendte Hall, in San Francisco.

Koviloor Digital Library

At Tucker Hall in Alameda he gave three lectures on the evenings of the thirteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth of April, known respectively as "Raja Yoga," 'Concentration and Breathing," and "The Practice of Religion." His final lecture in Oakland was on "The Ideals of India." In all his lectures the Swami held the attention of his hearers throughout, as was demonstrated by the many questions which were put to him at the end of his addresses.

The foregoing lists of lectures delivered by the Swami on the Pacific coast of America up to the end of April, though only a partial one, show that the greater portion of them touched on Raja Yoga. Unfortunately, with the exception of several of these lectures, all are lost, because they were not either reported verbatim and in full, or were not carefully collected from the newspapers, and his disciples the world over now feel the loss of "the faithful Goodwin" all the more.

Speaking on the art of breathing the Swami held that, if one had the perfect control of it and could make it rhythmical, the control of the mind would be complete. He said that this could be tested by any one going, when the mind might be in a disturbed state, to a place where one could be quiet, and breathe deeply and regularly. Such an one was sure to find in a short time how restlessness and agitation would gradually disappear, and calm and peace would take their place. Speaking of the power of concentration of the mind, he related on one occasion a personal experience of his, which may be recorded here.

Once, whilst in some town on the banks of a river in America, he chanced to meet with a party of young men who were shooting from a bridge at eggshells, which were moving with the current of a small stream. These shells were loosely strung together with strings, at one end of which were tied small bits of wood inserted crosswise into the shells, and at the other, a tiny stone, which served as a sort of anchor. Several of these young men tried to hit the shells, but almost all of them failed. The Swami watched them and was smiling at their failure, when one of the party noticed this and feeling

Koviloor Digital Library

some-what annoyed challenged him to try his hand at the game, assuring him that it was not so easy as it looked. He took the gun and successively hit about a dozen shells! They were all astonished and thought that he must evidently be a practised hand. But on their enquiry he replied to the contrary, saying that he had never handled a gun before, and explained to them that it was nothing, and that the only secret of his success lay in the concentration of the mind.

The Swami found his California work prospering beyond measure. In Los Angeles and Pasadena, Vedanta meetings were being held by his students regularly, and the Swami received many letters begging him to return there, but this was at present impossible as his work in the northern part of the State absorbed all his attention. He promised his disciples that he would send some other Sannyâsin teacher to take up his work, when feasible. In the North, several Vedanta centres were formed in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. Among his more intimate disciples in California were Mrs. Hainsborough of Los Angeles, and Dr. M. H. Logan, and Messrs. C. F. Patterson and A. S. Wollberg, respectively the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the newly-formed Vedanta Society in San Francisco. The San Francisco Vedantins were also eager to have a Swami to carry on a permanent Vedanta missionary propaganda, and they knew that the Swami's numerous responsibilities the world over could not permit him to settle permanently in any part of the world. So, like the Los Angeles disciples, they also begged him to send them another teacher when he should depart ; and this he promised to do. In fact, he wrote to the Swami Turiyananda to come at once, but this was not practicable for him to do, as he was then conducting the classes in New York in the place of the Swami Abhedananda, who was away on a preaching tour. Swamiji's own work in San Francisco and its vicinity, continued until the end of May.

Before he left California the Swami received the munificent gift of a large tract of land, 160 acres in extent, as a

Koviloor Digital Library

place of retreat for students of the Vedanta, through the generosity of Miss Minnie C. Boock, one of his devoted students. Though the Swami himself did not visit this place, he was much pleased with the accounts he heard of it. It was very suitably adapted for the purpose, being fifty miles from a railway station and twelve miles from the nearest habitation, except the Post-office, three miles distant. It was virgin soil, surrounded by forests and hills, being situated on the uplands in the southern part of the valley of the San Antone on the eastern slope of Mount Hamilton in Santa Clara County of California at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. It was twelve miles from the famous Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton. Being thus removed far from the conflicting influences of worldly life, the name "Shânti Ashrama" or "Peace Retreat" was appropriately given to it. On the second of August, the Swami Turiyananda went for the first time to the place with twelve students whom he trained regularly in meditation, living with them the austere monastic life as in India. These visitings of two months in the year have been kept up since then by the Swami in charge of the San Francisco centre.

Late in the spring of 1900, in the company of friends the Swami retired to Camp Taylor, in the country, for a short vacation. The end of the lecture course found him much exhausted. His health necessitated rest and change; and when he returned to San Francisco after three weeks, it was thought advisable that he should stop at the residence of his disciple, Dr. Logan, in Oak Street, there to be under constant medical supervision, if necessary. Dr. William Forster, a noted physician, also attended him. Thus he was prevented from resuming his public preaching for the present. He, however, gave a series of four lectures on the Gita in the parlours at 6, Greary Street and at the private Hall at 770 Oak Street on May 24th, 26th, 28th and 29th.

It would be well to make a few quotations here in order to convey an idea of the profound impression the Swami created by his teaching and preaching in California. A correspondent

Koviloor Digital Library

writing from San Francisco to the "Prabuddha Bharata" on the ninth of May, concerning the Swami's work in the Golden State, says, in part :—

".....If we may presume a comparative interest in California, in the land towards which our attention has recently been so forcefully turned, the land which has given us the master-thinker and teacher, the Swami Vivekananda, then will the following small account of the Vedanta work in California prove not uninteresting to your readers.

"The Swami Vivekananda came to the 'Golden State' some five months ago, a stranger in a strange land.....For some weeks he remained in Los Angeles, in the southern part of the State, teaching in the 'City of Angels' amidst much quiet enthusiasm, and with happy results, and from thence he came to San Francisco, capital city of California. Here his success was immediate. The first audience which greeted him, on February 18th, at the First Unitarian Church, Oakland, numbered over two thousand people, who listened to his words with the keenest attention and enthusiastic sympathy. Since that time, between forty and fifty lectures have been delivered by the Swami in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, on the various phases of the Vedanta Philosophy, and conditions and life in India. His teaching has aroused a wide-spread attention here, and will undoubtedly have a strong influence upon the religious thought of California. Three classes, for the further study of the Vedanta Philosophy, have been formed in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda, and it is possible that if the conditions are favourable, the Swami Vivekananda will send out to us another teacher. He himself regards California as a country peculiarly well-suited to the development of Oriental Philosophies, its climatic conditions being especially kind, its strange intermixture of races a fruitful soil wherein to plant this new-old thought, its youth a promise and potency of growth.

"The impression made by the Swami's teaching has been most profound. The impress of his brilliant and distinguished personality,—what he is,—is not less profound, but even deeper than his spoken word. Strange and electrifying to us to see the face of the warrior-thinker leap like a sword from its scabbard as the child-likeness of the Master's countenance falls away under the power of the spirit! Dear and beautiful it is to see his absolute kindliness to all with whom he comes into contact, his admirable simplicity of manner, and his charming humility; and strange and lovely to our unaccustomed ears is the music of his words, his wonderful eloquence in a foreign tongue, for the Swami Vivekananda is more than teacher, master, philosopher; he is a poet from the land of poetry. * * *"

Koviloor Digital Library

Another correspondent commenting on his work writes to "The Brahmavadin" as follows :—

"All hail, the light of Asia ! Thus, poet, sage, and devotee speak of the advent of the Swami Vivekananda upon our Western shores ! It were not difficult to you who know him, to understand the vivid and profound impression made by this brilliant and charming personality upon all those with whom he comes into contact, and the temptation to extravagance in speaking of him and his work. But we will attempt such sweet reasonableness as is possible to us, in this little appreciation of one of the deepest thinkers and finest spirits who has yet visited us for our blessing and delight. .....

"To some extent, California was prepared for the simple-subtle teaching of this Oriental sage.....

"* * * The interest in his doctrine has been steadily increasing,—even reaching the hopeful limit of a mild martyrdom of pulpit denunciation !—and though it is yet early to prophesy results, it seems safe to say that the enthusiasm thus awakened is of a permanent character..... He regards the Californian atmosphere, from its distinctive climate and racial conditions, as being peculiarly well-fitted to the student of truth,—the State, perhaps therefore, a coming centre of Oriental thought ! Strange if the wedding of East and West were here to come, that nice balance of ideal and material, by which the noble conception of a universal religion should be made possible !.....

"Had we been able to claim for our climate a perfect kindness to the Swami Vivekananda, our measure of content had been full, and it was perhaps owing to the lavish gift of his strength in our service, than to the climate, that the latter days of his lectures here found him somewhat seriously indisposed. * * *"

There were many occasions, here in California, when the Swami gave himself over to recreation and sweet communion with his disciples. At the retreat at Camp Taylor he took long walks in the open country and felt himself much improved thereby. And he would often join on invitation a picnic party arranged by his disciples in the hills that lie between Pasadena and Los Angeles, or even beyond Pasadena, in the forest defiles and mountain valleys. He would be now seen lovingly human and then at the very next moment divinely august in the words he spoke casually concerning the higher life. There were three ladies, well-connected in Los Angeles society and sisters of the well-known banker, Mr. Mead, whom the Swami reckoned as his disciples. One

Koviloor Digital Library

of these, Mrs. Hainsborough, would go to any length in doing service to the Swami. They it was who attended to his physical needs while in that city, and Mrs. Hainsborough relates how oftentimes the Swami came to her as a little child in a dilemma owing to the difficulties of putting on collars and cuffs. He frequently related to these three sisters stories of his Indian experience and acquainted them, in an especial sense, with Indian ideals, and they in their turn helped in propagating the Vedanta teaching.

But though he was generally full of mirth and childlike sweetness and freedom, there was always the undertone of more serious states of soul. Throughout his Western experience one hears the longing for the Absolute, now in letters, then from the platform, and again in private conversation. And at Alameda, probably when his work had weighed heaviest on him physically, and his mind tired from the strain yearned that all his Karma might be ended so that the whole book of experience might be closed for him, one finds him writing a letter to Miss McLeod, which is a very passion of his longing to break all bonds and fly unto the Highest. One finds in this letter the old "Kaivalya" instinct in him cropping forth; he desired the Supreme Isolation, and his mind yearned for that ecstasy which he had so often known in Dakshineswar in the days past long ago. This letter reads, dated April 18th, 1900:—

"* * * Work is always difficult. Pray for me, that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her work, She knows. * * *

"I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things and am waiting for the Great Deliverer.

"Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore!

"After all, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good him and so forth are all superimpositions.

"Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling! 'I come, Lord,

Koviloor Digital Library

I come.' 'Let the dead bury the dead ; follow thou Me !' 'I come, my beloved Lord, I come !'

"Yes, I come ! Nirvana is before me ! I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, or a breath.

"I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders,—glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound ; I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me, or I enter into Freedom in the body,—the old man is gone, gone forever, never to come back again !

"The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away ;—the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

"You understand why I don't want to meddle with—; who am I to meddle with any one ? I have long given up my place as the leader. I have no right to raise my voice. Since the beginning of this year, I have not dictated anything in India. You know that..... The sweetest moments of my life have been when I was drifting. I am drifting again,—with the bright, warm Sun ahead, and masses of vegetation around,—and in the heat everything is so still, so calm,—and I am drifting, languidly, in the warm heart of the River ! I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet, for fear of hurting the wonderful stillness,—stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion !

"Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power ! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come, in Thy warm bosom,—floating wheresoever Thou takest me,—in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor !

"Oh, it is so calm ! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great, distance, in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and Peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet Peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows,—without fear, without love,...without emotion,—Peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures ! I come, Lord, I come !

"The world *is*, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotion ! Oh, the blessedness of it ! Everything is good and beautiful, for they are all losing their relative proportions to me,—my body among the first.

"Om That Existence ! * * *"

The Swami had worked in California, it may be said, to excess. In all, his public lectures both in the north and the south of the State numbered no less than one hundred. Besides these he was always busy giving private talks and intimate teaching to numerous ardent souls. No wonder then

Koviloor Digital Library

that he was exhausted in the body which had never fully recovered to bear the extreme strain to which he recklessly submitted himself. But he wrote in a letter at the time that his mind was never clearer than at present. The lectures which created the widest attention and which were reported in long hand were, as has been said, first of all, "Christ The Messenger," then, "Work and Its Secret," "The Powers of the Mind," "Hints on Practical Spirituality," The Open Secret," "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion," and "The Great Teachers of the World",—all of which were delivered either at Los Angeles or at Pasadena.

Towards the latter part of his stay in California, the Swami received a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, then in London, to join them in Paris in July for the sake of his health He was also invited by the Foreign Delegates' Committee of the Congress of the History of Religions that was to be held in conjunction with the Paris Exposition of 1900, to lecture before that distinguished assembly. So there were two reasons why he found it necessary to leave his present work. Besides, he thought it best to spend several weeks in New York before finally leaving America. Therefore, it was at the end of May that the Swami bade his disciples in San Francisco, Alameda and Oakland farewell, promising them, however, that in the near future he would send the Swami Turiyananda to them as the head of the Vedanta movement in California.

The journey across the continent proved most fatiguing. He made short stops *en route* at Chicago and Detroit to visit his old friends there. When he arrived in New York, he took up his residence at the Vedanta Society headquarters, and received many of his former disciples and admirers, together with an increasing number of persons who desired to see him, as they had already become acquainted with his ideas through his writings. He gave a few public lectures, but did not care to do much work of this kind. He was chiefly desirous of meeting his old friends and disciples, and as in the days at Thousand Island Park he spent most of his

Koviloor Digital Library

time in teaching them and in conversation with them. He was much pleased to see the Vedanta Society carrying on its work satisfactorily. Because of the pressure of other business, Mr. Leggett had resigned the presidentship. The choice of the members thereupon fell on Dr. Herschell C. Parker of Columbia College, who was unanimously elected as the next President. Among the honorary members of the Society at this time were the Rev. Dr. R. Heber Newton and Charles R. Lanman, Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University. The Swami lectured on four successive Sundays and held a Gita class on four Saturday mornings during his stay in New York. He spoke to the Swami Turiyananda, who had been lecturing at the Society rooms from April, and had been holding Children's Classes in Vedanta, of his intention of sending him to California at once.

In the report of the Assistant Secretary of the Vedanta Society for June, one reads:—

"* * * On the 7th of June, Swami Vivekananda came to New York from California and stayed in the Vedanta Society Rooms, 102 E. 58th St., with Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda. At that time the Sister Nivedita was also in the City and she was present at most of the meetings.

"On the following Saturday, June 9th, Swami Vivekananda conducted the morning class in Bhagavad-Gita, relieving Swami Turiyananda, who usually taught the class. On Sunday morning, June 10th, Swami Vivekananda lectured in the Vedanta Society Rooms on the subject of 'Vedanta Philosophy.' The rooms were filled to their utmost capacity with students and old friends of the Swami. A reception was given to Swami Vivekananda on the following Friday evening, thus giving an opportunity to old friends to meet him once more, and many students who had long wished to meet the renowned author of Raja Yoga, were made happy by receiving a few kind words and a grasp of the Master's hand. He spoke on the object of the Vedanta Society, and of work in America.

"The next morning, Saturday, June 17th, he also took charge of the class and lectured on 'What is Religion?' The Sister Nivedita spoke in the evening on 'The Ideals of Hindu Women', giving a most beautiful and sympathetic account of their simple life and purity of thought. The women students, who were always most eager to hear of the every-day life and thought of their Hindu sisters, especially enjoyed this talk. The Sister Nivedita was pleased at the interest that was felt, and answered many

Koviloor Digital Library

questions which were asked, so that most of the people went away with a clearer idea of life in India than they had ever known.

"On June 23rd, Swami Vivekananda conducted the Gita class, and on Sunday, June 24th, he lectured on 'The Mother-Worship'. In the evening the Sister Nivedita spoke again on 'The Ancient Arts of India'. Her talk was most entertaining because of her familiarity with the subject. Her visit and conversation were very instructive.....

"Swami Vivekananda conducted the class on the morning of June 30th, and the next morning, Sunday, July 1st, lectured on the 'Source of Religion'. As on all previous occasions, the rooms were crowded, and all felt it a privilege to hear the Swami. On July 3rd, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda left New York, the former going to Detroit to visit old friends, and Swami Turiyananda went to California, to establish a '*Shânti Ashrama*' and to take charge of the Vedanta Society work at San Francisco.....

"* * * On July 10th, Swami Vivekananda returned from Detroit and stayed at the Society rooms here until the latter part of July. On the 20th he sailed for Paris . ....."

Memorable were those parting words of Swamiji to the Swami Turiyananda when the latter asked him for some advice as how to conduct the work which he was being sent to take up. "Go and establish the Ashrama in California," exclaimed the Swami in reply. "Hoist the flag of Vedanta there. From this moment destroy even the very memory of India! Above all, live the *life* and the Mother will see to the rest!"

Among the celebrities who were in sympathy with the Swami's work and with the Vedanta Philosophy and Indian culture at large, were Professor Seth Low, the President of the Columbia University, Prof. A. V. W. Jackson of Columbia College, Professor Thomas R. Price and E. Engalsmann of the College of the City of New York, and Professors Richard Botthiel, N. M. Butler, N. A. McLouth, E. G. Sihler, Calvin Thomas and A. Cohn of the New York University.

Among the disciples that the Swami frequently visited in New York was Miss Waldo. The Swami saw her often in these days, and spent many hours with her discussing philosophy and plans of work. Another intimate friend of the Swami, and one who had introduced him into very dis-

Koviloor Digital Library

tinguished circles, both in Chicago in the days of the Parliament of Religions, and in New York, was Mrs. Annie Smith, whom he was wont to call "Mother Smith". She had been born in India, and from early womanhood had interested herself in Indian philosophies. She was well known in America as a lecturer on Oriental subjects. Mrs. Smith sometime after the Swami's passing away spent four years in Los Angeles and in Pasadena, and wrote that she "found the spiritual seed of the Swami's planting springing up all over the Pacific coast, for he vitalised American religions and sects, as well as Hinduism."

His stay in Detroit of seven days at the house of Mrs. Greenstidel had been purely of a private nature. Only once or twice did he hold conversaziones for the benefit of his immediate disciples and intimate friends. The last ten days that the Swami spent in rest and retirement in New York in the circle of his followers, were enjoyed not only by the latter but by himself also, though it was all too short. One of them writing of the Swami at this time, said :—

"He has broadened in his sympathies and expanded in his knowledge during the four years of his absence from America. While the season is now over for lectures and classes, Swamiji's old friends are basking in the sunshine of his presence. His health is now excellent and he is his dear old self once more, with yet a mingling of a newer, nobler self that makes us adore him more than ever.....He has to be a world-worker, and so no rest can be for him until that work is done."

It is with these thoughts that one closes this record of the last visit of the Swami to America, and travels on with him to other scenes in other lands.

On the twentieth of July the Swami sailed for Paris where further fame and work awaited him.

Koviloor Digital Library

CXIX.

THE PARIS CONGRESS, AND A TOUR IN EUROPE.

From the first of August, 1900, when he is seen in Paris, until the middle of the following December when he returned unexpectedly to India, the Swami stayed mostly in Paris and for a short time at Lannion in the province of Brittany, and made a tour visiting Vienna, Constantinople, Athens and Egypt, stopping in each place for a few days only. He remained in Paris until the evening of the twenty-fourth of October, when he boarded the train which bore him eventually to Stamboul.

In Paris he was at first the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett at their handsome residence in the Place des Etats Unis. Later, on his return from Brittany, where he was the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull, he lived with Monsieur Jules Blois, a famous philosopher, journalist, literary writer, and student of comparative religions, in order that thereby he might become more proficient in the French language, as his host and his household spoke nothing but French.

While the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami met numerous distinguished people. His hosts entertained largely and lavishly and held numerous salons, at which celebrated men of all departments of knowledge and culture gathered, among them being noted poets, philosophers, professors, sculptors, painters, scientists, singers, actors and actresses and moralists. The Swami was a welcome guest at these salons which lent an attractive brightness to the opening of the season in that fascinating city. The conversaziones proved splendid opportunities for him in spreading his message and exchanging ideas with many leading thinkers of the West, all of whom were deeply impressed with the breadth and depth of his intelligence and with the grandeur of his personality.

Koviloor Digital Library

The leading episode of his stay in Paris was his appearance at the Congress of the History of Religions then in session at Paris in connection with the Paris Exposition Universalle. For this occasion the Swami had prepared himself two months previously, in endeavouring to master French so that he could deliver his lectures in that language. Soon after his arrival in the French metropolis he came in daily touch with the famous Western and Asiatic Orientalists who had assembled for the Congress. His presence was a delight and an illumination to all. He found that he could speak French with ease and make the intricate terms of Sanskrit philosophy readily intelligible to his hearers in that foreign language.

As for the Congress of the History of Religions itself, it had been substituted for a real Parliament of Religions which had been the primary idea of the organisers of the Congress. Rumour had it that, owing to the vehement opposition of the Roman Catholic world, the idea of holding another Parliament of Religions had been defeated, it being feared that Oriental ideas might again receive too prominent an attention for the safety of orthodox Christianity. Therefore at the Paris Congress no discussion on the views and doctrines of any religion was allowed. Its purpose was only to enquire into the historic evolution of the different forms of established faiths and other facts incidental to it. Accordingly, missionary sects of different religions and their beliefs were not represented in the Congress; it was attended only by such scholars as devoted themselves to the study of the origin and history of different religions. Though he was present at several sittings of the Congress, the Swami's ill-health prevented him from lecturing before that assembly more than twice. He had been appointed by the Congress committee to debate with the Western Orientalists as to whether the Vedic religion was the outcome of nature-worship. The prominent position he had attained as the spokesman of Vedanta philosophy and Indian culture in the West, and his numerous lectures and writings, which the Western

Koviloor Digital Library

Orientalists had either read or personally heard, had made the Congress organisers feel that he, above all others, was the ablest to interpret the Indian position.

At the Congress the Swami was warmly received, his very appearance causing great commotion among the distinguished gathering. His first words at the Congress were in connection with the paper read by Mr. Gustav Oppert, a German Orientalist, who endeavoured to trace the origin of the Salagrama-Sila and the Shiva-Lingam to mere phallicism. To this the Swami objected, adducing proofs from the Vedas, and particularly the Atharva Veda Samhita, to the effect that the Shiva-Lingam had its origin in the idea of the Yupa-Stambha or Skambha, the sacrificial post, idealised in Vedic ritual as the symbol of the Eternal Brahman. "As afterwards," said the Swami, "the flame of the Yajana fire, its smoke, and ashes, and the bull that carried on its back the Soma plant and the wood for the Vedic Scrifice, gave place to the conceptions of Shiva's yellow-red matted hair, His blue throat, the decoration of His body (with ashes) and His riding on the bull ;—just so, the Yupa-Skambha gave place in time to the Shiva-Lingam, and was deified to the high Devahood of Sri Shankara. Then, also, the Shiva-Lingam might have been more definitely developed through the influence of Buddhism, with its Bauddha Stupas, or memorial topes, in which the relics, either of the Buddha Himself, or of some great Buddhist *Bhikshus*, used to be deposited. It was quite probable that during the Buddhistic ascendency the Hindus adopted this custom and used to erect memorials resembling their *Skambha*. The Salagrama-Silas were natural stones, resembling the artificially-cut stones of the Dhatu garbha, or "metal-wombed" stone-relic-cases of the Bauddha Stupas, and thus being first worshipped by the Bauddhas gradually got into Vaishnavism. The explanation of the Salagrama-Sila as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention. It had been a degenerate period in India following the downfall of Buddhism, which had brought on the association of sex with the Shiva-Lingam. In reality, the Shiva Lingam and

Koviloor Digital Library

the Salagrama-Sila had no more to do with Sex-worship than the Holy Communion in Christianity had in common with cannibalism.

In his second lecture the Swami dilated on the Vedas as the Common Basis of Hinduism as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India, on the priority of Sri Krishna to Buddha and on the alleged influence of Greek thought and art on Indian culture. The Gita, the Swami held, was prior to the Mahabharata, if not contemporaneous, but by no means later. Both the thought and the language of the Gita were the same as those of the Mahabharata; therefore, how could the Gita have been later than the Mahabharata? And if it had been compiled much later, in the Buddhist period, why, when it attempted at the reconciliation of all the religious creeds prevalent in India at that period, should the Gita not have mentioned Buddha and Buddhism, if Buddhism were then in existence? He said that Krishna was several centuries prior to Buddha, and that the Worship of Krishna was much older than that of Buddha.

And as for Greek influence on Indian culture he contended against the hasty European notion that it was on everything Indian,—on Indian literature, Indian art, Indian astrology, Indian arithmetic, and so on. There might be, it was true, some similarity between Greek and Indian terms in astronomy and so forth, but the Westerners, prepossessed with some circumstantial evidence, had ignored the direct Sanskrit etymology and sought to find out some far-fetched etymology from the Greek. That such shallow and biased learning had been manifested by many Orientalists in the West was most deplorable. From a single Sanskrit Sloka, that reads, "The Yavanas are Mlechchhas, in them this science is established, therefore even they deserve worship like Rishis, ...", the Western imagination had become so inflamed with an unrighteous self-boasting, that one has been bold enough to go so far as to declare that all Indian sciences as a rule are but echoes of the Greek! Whereas the true reading

Koviloor Digital Library

of the Sloka might bring one to the sober reflection that the Mlechchha disciples of the Aryans are herein praised, in order to encourage them in a further pursuit of the Aryan Sciences. The effort to trace the Indian drama to Greek sources was also preposterous, for nothing in the Sanskrit dramas bore any similarity, either to Greek literary methods or to Greek histrionic forms. Lastly, turning Professor Max Müller's own premises against him, the Swami argued that unless one Hindu who had known Greek could be brought forward, one ought not to talk even of Greek influence on Indian science or culture. The Swami closed his arguments with the sound counsel that Western Orientalists, who spent so much time on a single Greek work should do likewise with one Sanskrit work ; then only some true account of the exchange of ideas between East and West, in various historic periods, could be gathered. Like Pythogoras, the celebrated Greek, whom Clement of Alexandria had no hesitation in calling a pupil of the Brâhmanas, they might even come to India to learn.

After the lecture, many present expressed their opinions, for or against the subject, and declared that they agreed with most of what the Swami had said, and assured him that the old days of Sanskrit antiquarianism were past and gone. The views of the modern school of Sanskrit scholars in the West, they said, were largely the same as those of the Swami's. They agreed also with his statement that there was much true history in the Puranas and the ancient traditions religiously believed by the Hindus. Lastly, the learned President of the Congress said, that he was highly pleased with the Swami's statements, and differed with him only in reference to the contemporaneousness of the Gita and the Mahabharata, his only reason, however, being that the majority of Western Orientalists thought that the former was not a part of the latter.

While in Paris, both before and after the Congress, the Swami was busy with constant reflections and observations on French culture. Many of these he embodied in his now celebrated writing, known under the heading of "The East and

Koviloor Digital Library

the West (See "Complete works", Part V.) Therein he speaks of Paris as the centre, the fountainhead of European civilisation,—of Western ethics, manners and customs, of its sciences, philosophy and art,—and of the Paris university as the model of all other European universities. Of France he says that it is the home of liberty, that it has vitalised the Italian Renaissance, and infused a new life into Europe, and that through its influence on the Stuart line of Scotland the Royal Society in England and other noteworthy British institutions were founded. As for Paris itself, the modern city was largely the creation of Napoleon III., and that no city in the world could compare with it. As for Europe generally, it was a vast military camp; in striking contrast to this fact, the Aryans had always been the lovers of peace. His reflections on the origin of races, on many theological conceptions, such as the Divine Motherhood, prevalent in Christianity itself under the form of the worship of the Virgin Mary, his contrast of the ethical and social ideals of the East and West and their consequent historical influence are most interesting and instructive. Especially the contrasts the Swami drew between the civilisation of Europe and that of Asia afford a prodigious insight as to the points of similarity and dissimilarity between the Asiatic and Occidental standards of life.

In this connection, the Paris Exposition afforded him unique opportunities for study. He visited the Exhibition on numerous occasions, always bringing therefrom some new revelation or some new contrast, or intellectual discovery. The varied and artistic exhibits pleased the fastidious eye of the Swami, and nothing of interest escaped his keen glance. The authorities of the Exposition received him with honour and he was accorded every privilege for original observation.

Among the distinguished persons with whom he came into intimate contact during his stay in Paris, were the learned Professor Patrick Geddes of Edinburgh University, Monsieur Jules Blois, Pére Hyacinthe, Mr. Hiram Maxim, Madame Calvé, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Princess Demidoff, and his own countryman, Dr. J. C. Bose, who had also been

Koviloor Digital Library

invited to attend the Exposition in connection with the Congress of Scientists, and who by his remarkable discoveries thrilled the whole scientific world of the West. He met Dr. Bose frequently, and he would point out to his numerous acquaintances the greatness of this Indian scientist, "the pride and glory of Bengal." And when others would dilate on the merits of European scientists, he would endeavour to prove that his own countryman was far superior ; and if his own countryman differed from European thinkers with reference to certain lines of investigation, he would back him against the whole world and would remark that he was sure that his friend would invent more delicate instruments and make more accurate measurements in proof of his conclusions. Once at a distinguished gathering, when a disciple of a certain celebrated English scientist laid claim to the fact that her master was experimenting on the growth of a stunted lily, the Swami replied humorously, "O , that's nothing ! Dr. Bose will make the very pot in which the lily grows respond !"

It was after the Congress of the History of Religions that the Swami accepted the invitation of Mrs. Ole Bull, to become her guest in a cottage she had taken at Lannion in Brittany. Here he gave himself up to leisure and retreat, though his conversations with those who surrounded him, including the Sister Nivedita, now returned from America and likewise the guest of Mrs. Bull, were unusually luminous. The story of Lord Buddha was much in his mind in these days and one finds him reciting passages from the "Jâtakas", or the "Lalita Vistâra", or the "Vinaya Pitaka" and other great Buddhist works. He would tell how after the Nirvana of the Buddha, He had become the very embodiment of the highest spiritual poetry, and he would illustrate his thoughts with beautiful passages from the Buddhist Scriptures relating to the famous "Upali Prichcha", or the "Questions of Upali, the Barbar," or to the "Dhaniya Sutta" from the famous "Sutta Nipata." Drawing philosophical contrasts, he would show the points of difference between the Buddhist and

Koviloor Digital Library

Advaita positions, and then point out the unity of ideas between the Sublime Negation of the Buddhist and the Supreme Negation of Advaita, saying, "Buddhism must be right! Re-incarnation is only a mirage! But this vision is to be reached by the path of Advaita alone!" In his final summing up of statement in this connection he said, "The great point of contrast between Buddhism and Hinduism lies in the fact that Buddhism said, 'Realise all this as illusion,' while Hinduism said, 'Realise that within the illusion is the Real.' Of *how* this was to be done, Hinduism never presumed to enunciate any rigid law. The Buddhist command could only be carried out through monasticism; the Hindu might be fulfilled through any state of life. All alike were roads to the One Real. One of the highest and greatest expressions of the Faith is put into the mouth of a butcher, preaching, by the orders of a married woman, to a Sannyâsin. Thus Buddhism became the religion of a monastic order, but Hinduism, in spite of its exaltation of monasticism remains ever the religion of faithfulness to daily duty, whatever it be, as the path by which man may attain to God." Hinduism, he held, included not only all the faiths within her own fold but the message of Buddhism and Buddha Himself as well. She as the mother of religions had learned to regard Buddha as the most lion-hearted of all her Avatârs.

One of the most powerful factors which contributed to the Swami's supreme veneration for Buddha was, to quote the Sister Nivedita's words,—

"The spectacle of the constant tallying of his own Master's life, lived before his eyes, with this world-attested story of twenty-five centuries before. In Buddha, he saw Ramakrishna Paramahamsa: in Ramakrishna he saw Buddha. In a flash this train of thought was revealed, one day when he was describing the scene of the death of Buddha. He told how the blanket had been spread for Him beneath the tree, and how the Blessed One had lain down, 'resting on His right side, like a lion', to die, when suddenly there came to Him one who ran, for instruction. The disciples would have treated the man as an intruder, maintaining peace at any cost about their Master's death-

Koviloor Digital Library

bed, but the Blessed One overheard, and saying, 'No, no! He who was sent (the *Tathagata*, meaning, the Swami explained, 'very like your Messiah') is ever ready,' He raised Himself on His elbow and taught. This happened four times, and then, and then only, Buddha held Himself free to die.....

"The immortal story went on to its end. But to one who listened, the most significant moment had been that in which the teller paused at his own words,—'raised Himself on His elbow and taught'—and said in brief parenthesis, 'I saw this, you know, in the case of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa!' And there arose before the mind the story of one, destined to learn from that Teacher, who had travelled a hundred miles, and arrived at Cossipur Garden only when he lay dying. Here also the disciples would have refused admission, but Sri Ramakrishna intervened, insisting on receiving the new-comer, and teaching him."

Sometimes it would give the Swami pleasure to play off Sankarachârya against Buddha, as it were, by calling in Advaita to the aid of Buddhism. The combination ofthe heart of Buddha and the intellect of Sankarachârya, he considered the highest possibility of humanity, and this he saw only in his own Master amongst the muster-roll of the World's Teachers and Saviours.

The Swami was always the religious observer. In some small chapel in Brittany, or in the great cathedrals of Paris, he saw always the points of similarity between the ritual of Hinduism and Roman Catholicism; and in this sense he once proclaimed, "Christianity is not foreign to the Hindu mind." It was in Brittany when he paid a visit on Michaelmas Day with his hostess and fellow-guests to Mont Saint Michael that,looking at the dungeon-cages where prisoners were isolated in mediæval times, he was heard to remark under his breath: "What a wonderful place for meditation!" At another time, filled with a consciousness of the Power that worked through him, he exclaimed: "All that is aginst me must be with me in the end. Am I not HER soldier?"

Somedays before he himself left Brittany his disciple, the Sister Nivedita, bade him farewell to go to England, there to raise an active interest on behalf of her Indian women's work. Before she went he gave her his blessings and said, "There is a peculiar sect of Mohammedans who are reported

Koviloor Digital Library

to be so fanatical that they take each newborn babe and expose it, saying, 'If God made thee, perish! If Ali made thee, live!' Now this which they say to the child, I say, but in the opposite sense, to you, to-night—'Go forth into the world, and there, If I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!" On this occasion, now that she was about to enter, for an indefinite period, on new paths of endeavour without his immediate guidance, the Sister remarks, she felt that, "The thought must have crossed his mind that old ties were perilous to a foreign allegiance. He had seen so many betrayals of honour that he seemed always to be ready for a new desertion. If any case, the moment was critical to the fate of the disciple, and this he did not fail to realise." Before she had left India, in his company, he had told her that she must resume, as if she had never broken them off, all her old habits and social customs of the West.

When he returned from Brittany to Paris the Swami again moved in the most distinguished circles. In all his talks he missed no opportunity of showing, in ways distinctly his own, the influence of India over the entire thought of mankind. He would refer to the unmistakable evidences of Hindu religious ideas having travelled in ancient times from India, on the one side to Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Australia, as far as the shores of America, and on the other side, to Thibet, China, Japan, and as far up as Siberia. He would dilate on the extension of the Buddhist missionary work in Syria, Egypt, Macedonia and Epirus in the reigns, respectively, of Antiochus Theos, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Antigonos Gonates and Alexander. Then, perhaps, he would tell his interested visitors, of the influence of the Tartars in the making of universal history, and of their later conquest in Central and Western Asia, and finally in India itself. And oftentimes he would say, "The Tartar is the wine of the race! He gives energy and power to every blood!" He saw Europe as the admixture of numbers of Asiatic and Semi-Asiatic races, intermingled with the barbarians of the forests of Germany and the wildernesses of ancient Gaul and Spain.

Koviloor Digital Library

He saw European culture as having been formed, to a large extent, by Moorish influence in Spain and the learning and science of the mediæval Arabs. Whensoever Europe had come into contact with Asia it had meant a renaissance of the former, and also a wholesale scattering of Oriental spiritual ideas. This monumental learning and patriotism which the Swami evinced, captured all minds and hearts. He was scathing in his reproof of the alleged dominance of European over Asiatic culture; and history and archæology and philosophy were always at his service to prove the superior glory of Asiatic ideas.

One of the greatest sympathisers in his ideas and with whom the Swami was specially on intimate terms, both before and after his visit to Brittany was Pére Hyacinthe, that whilom Carmelite monk who was held in high repute as a popular liberal preacher. As a monk he exerted a great influence in France and in the whole Catholic world by his learning, uncommon oratory and his austerities. He was excommunicated in 1869 for persisting in denouncing the abuses of the Church. He obtained a dispensation from his monastic vows and became the Abbé Loyson; but he protested against the declaration of papal infallibility and sided with the Old Catholics. In 1872 he married an American lady and became known as Monsieur Charles Loyson. But Swamiji always called him by his old monastic name. These episodes in his life created a stir in Europe at the time. The Roman Catholics hated him and the Protestants welcomed him with open arms. The aged Loyson was now devoting his time to a reconciliation of the many conflicting views prevalent in Christianity, and was a student of comparative religions. In the Swami's own words, "He was possessed of a very sweet nature, modest and of the temperament of a Bhakta." Victor Hugo, in praising two writers of French, had mentioned Pére Hyacinthe as one of these. Many were the times when the Swami and the Pére had long discussions on the subjects of religion and the spiritual life, and on sects and creeds; and many were the

Koviloor Digital Library

times when the Swami spoke eloquently to him of Vairâgyam and renunciation, the old memories of monastic life were stirred up in the heart of the former monk. Later on, he with his wife accompanied the Swami and his party in their travels to Constantinople. The Swami again met his friend at Scutari in Asia Minor, whither the Pére had proceeded on his journey to Jerusalem to bring about a *rapprochement* between the Christians and the Mohammedans. The Swami then had long conversations with him, particularly with reference to American colleges. Throughout their acquaintance, this distinguished clergyman regarded the Swami as one sent to him from Heaven. Through conversations with him, the Swami gained a great insight into the management and hierarchy of Roman Catholicism.

M. Jules Blois, with whom the Swami now stayed, was a man acquainted with the highest intellectual circles in Paris; he was a follower of those Vedantic ideas that had influenced Victor Hugo and Lamartine among the French, and Goethe and Schiller among the Germans. He was well-skilled in making researches into the historical truths underlying religious sects and superstitions. The Swami reckoned him as a most agreeable intellectual companion. Through his friend's numerous associations with many well-known people in Paris, the Swami found exceptional opportunities of spreading Vedantic ideas and true conceptions about India in that most cultured city of Europe. His own contributions to the Udbodhan, under the heading of "The Parivrâjaka" teem with the liveliest interest and the keenest observations on the history of nations and their civilisation. In these, he does not spare his own people, for he condemns in many places their backwardness in practical matters, their treatment of the lower classes and so forth; but throughout one catches glimpses of his great patriotism and also of his belief in the stability and the universal message of Indian ideals.

With Professor Geddes, the Swami had numerous conversations pertaining to the evolution of races, the Modern Transition in Europe, the ancient Greek civilisation and the

Koviloor Digital Library

great influence it had exerted in formulating European culture. There was still another celebrity who coming into close contact with the Swami in Paris became his warm friend, namely, Mr. Hiram Maxim of gun fame. This gentleman, the Swami said, objected to being reminded of his remarkable invention, the automatic machine-gun which bears his name, and which is capable of firing as many as 620 rounds per minute at the range of 3,000 yards. He would say. "Well, Sir, have I not invented any other thing except that man-killing machine?" Mr. Maxim was a lover of China, of India, and an accomplished writer on religion and philosophy. Having read the Swami's books and lectures he had long been a great admirer of him. "He could not bear," says the Swami, "Christian Missionaries going to convert people in China, he himself being a lover of Confucius. Under various Chinese pseudonyms he often wrote to the papers against Missionary propaganda in China. His wife was of the same religious views step and opinion."

The Swami met the celebrated Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest actress of the West, with whom he was previously acquainted. She had a great love for India and told Swamiji many times that his country was "very ancient, very civilised." One year she staged a drama concerning India, and she presented on the stage a perfectly realistic scene of an Indian street, with its men, women, children, and Sâdhus. After the play was over, she told Swamiji that in order to gain a true setting for her play, she had visited for full one month every museum, and carefully studied and acquainted herself with everything relating to Indian men, women, their dress, streets and so on. She had a great desire to see India. "*Ce mon rêve*"—that is the dream of my life,—she said, and she confided to Swamiji that the Prince of Wales, who became later, the King-Emperor, Edward VII., had promised to arrange everything for her comfort during her travels in India and for her shooting tigers and elephants. However, she told Swamiji that she could not go to India just then, as such a journey would require the spending of several lacs of rupees, for

Koviloor Digital Library

she must have her special train, a retinue of attendants and companions, and so forth. She, "*the divine Sarah*," as she is called, had no lack of money, for she earned lacs of rupees a year, but she spent money in such a lavish way, living in such luxury and style, as was beyond the means of many European monarchs.

During his stay in Paris Swamiji also came into closer touch with one of his old admirers, Madame Calvé, the greatest opera singer of the West. Her culture was not only in the art of singing, but she was also very learned and had great respect for philosophical and religious literature. Of her Swamiji wrote : "She was born poor, but by her innate talents, prodigious labour and diligence, and wrestling against much hardship, she is now enormously rich and commands respect from kings and emperors.....Though there are other great singers of both sexes,.....Calvé's genius coupled with learning is unique. The rare combination of beauty, youth, talents and 'divine' voice has assigned Calvé the highest place among the singers of the West. There is, indeed, no higher teacher than misery and poverty. That constant fighting against dire poverty, misery and hardship of the days of her girlhood, which has led to her present triumph over them, has brought into her life a unique sympathy and a depth of thought with a wide outlook."

Miss Josephine MacLeod proved a most helpful personal companion for the Swami in Paris ; it was she who conducted him to the various places of interest in the huge metropolis and who afforded him opportunities, both for pleasure and study. To her he was "Master" and friend in one ; and to this day her memories of the Swami are numerous and interesting.

The Swami's correspondence, as can easily be inferred, was voluminous. Letters came to him from all quarters of the globe, telling of the success of Vedanta work in England, America and India, and also bearing news of the individual progress of his immediate disciples. The Sister Nivedita was then giving a series of lectures in london, some private,

Koviloor Digital Library

some semi-public, on the ideals of India and on the condition of Indian women, as she had done in New York. Swami Abhedananda in New York was gaining adherents amongst most distinguished people, whilst Swami Turiyananda was consolidating the work in California and was then training, specially, a group of disciples at the recently acquired Shanti Ashrama. From India, the Swami heard frequent reports from the monastery at Belur, from the newly-founded Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas, from his disciples in Madras, and from the Swami Akhandananda and other Sannyâsins engaged in works of service.

After almost three months' sojourn in France, the Swami left Paris on the night of October the twenty-fourth by the Oriental Express Train, which runs every day from Paris to Stamboul. His companions were Monsieur and Madame Loyson, M. Jules Blois, Madame Calvé, and Miss Josephine MacLeod Madame Calvé had decided not to sing that winter but take rest and change in the temperate climate of Egypt, and Swamiji at her special request went as her guest. Early in the morning, the Swami, who was with Monsieur Blois in one compartment, saw that the train had crossed the French frontier and was passing through German territory, which was familiar to him through his previous visit to the Continent following the summer of 1896. On the evening of the twenty-fifth the party reached Vienna, where a stop of three days was made. Here the many places of interest were visited, notably the Schönbrunn Palace, near Vienna, where Napoleon's son had been kept almost as a prisoner, and had died of a broken heart,—an episode immortalised in a play, named L'aiglon, meaning, the Young Eagle, which created quite a sensation in Paris at the time, and which the Swami had recently seen under the special patronage of Madame Sarah Bernhardt. He was interested in finding that each room of this Palace was furnished and decorated with the art and workmanship of some special country. India and China had not been forgotten, and he was specially pleased to see the Indian decorations. The Museum was also visited, and

Koviloor Digital Library

the Swami was especially interested in its celebrated scientific section, and its Dutch paintings. He remained for three days in Vienna, but to see other cities of Europe after Paris, was disappointing to him. Of Austria he remarked, "If Turkey is called 'The sick man of Europe', Austria ought to be called, 'The sick woman of Europe !"

On the twenty-eighth of October, the party took the Oriental Express for Constantinople which they reached on the thirtieth, having passed through Hungary, Servia, Roumania and Bulgaria *en route*. When they arrived they found much trouble because of the octroi department which examined all the books and papers they had with them. After much remonstrance and persuasion from Madame Calvé and Jules Blois, all the books save two were restored.

In Constantinople the Swami was much amused to get after a long time parched gram, a favourite thing with his own countrymen. On the evening of his arrival he saw many interesting sites and the next day, together with Miss MacLeod, he went for a trip on the Bosphorus by boat. It was extremely cold and windy ; therefore they alighted at the first station and decided to visit Scutari, which lies across the strip of water that separates Europe from Asia Minor, and see Pére Hyacinthe who was staying there on his way to Palestine. Some difficulty they experienced, however, because neither of them were acquainted with Turkish or Arabic. By signs they managed to hire a boat to take them to Scutari, and later on a carriage to their destination. There the Swami visited Pére Hyacinthe, with whom he held a long and interesting conversation. They saw on the way the home of the Sufi monks, who were also healers of disease. Their method was to chant the *Kalma* by swaying backwards and forwards, then dance until they fell into a trance, and in that mystic state they would trample on the body of the diseased persons, and thus effect a cure. The Swami visited the bazaars in this place and conversed in English with a number of Turkish students. That day he had his meal in the Scutari cemetery, no better place being found. The trip back to

Koviloor Digital Library

Constantinople proved somewhat difficult, as the boat in which they had come was found only after much seeking, and when they were landed on the opposite shore it was far out of the direction of their hotel. The Swami made his stay in Constantinople useful in various ways; every centre of interest was visited; he saw the museum, the sarcophagi, the charming scenery from the top of the place from which the daily gun was fired, the foreign quarters, and the old wall within whose compound was the dreaded jail.

He met several distinguished persons, both in Vienna and in Constantinople, through the letters of introduction he had brought with him from Mr. Maxim. Thus in Constantinople he dined with an officer of the French *Chargé d' affaires*, made the acquaintance of a Greek Pasha and also of an Albanian celebrity. As Pére Hyacinthe was not permitted to speak publicly in Constantinople, the Swami also could not do so. Several private conversaziones and drawing-room lectures were, however, arranged for him, at which he spoke on the religion of Vedanta to select audiences, who were most interested. He was glad to meet several Indians in this city, so distant from India.

An incident the Swami could never forget during his stay in Constantinople occurred when he met a certain old Turk, a keeper of an eating-house, who on hearing that he had come from India, invited him and his friends to dine at his establishment as his guests. Such marked hospitality, and this great reverence on the part of a Turk for distant India, deeply touched him.

After several days in Constantinople the Swami and his friends took steamer for Athens, seeing the Golden Horn and the Islands of Marmora *en route*, where he visited a Greek monastery and was much impressed with what he saw. On one of the islands he met the distinguished Prof. Leppel, whom he had known when he was a Professor in the Pachiappa's College in Madras In another of these islands he saw the ruins of an temple on the seashore, which he thought must have been dedicated to Neptune.

Koviloor Digital Library

At Athens the Swami visited all the ruins in and about this historic city, notably the Acropolis, the temple of the Goddess of Victory, the Parthenon, and many other places. One of his companions and guides here was Mademoiselle Melcarvi. On the second day of his stay he was shown the temple of the Olympian Jupiter, the Theatre Dionysis, etc On the third day it was Eleusis which was visited. This celebrated place had been the stronghold of the ancient Eleusinian mysteries and interested the Swami highly. Before leaving, he went to see the famous sculptures of Ageladas, who flourished between 576 to 486 B. C., and also some of the art masterpieces of the three great disciples of this distinguished ancient artist,—Phidias, Myron and Polycletus.

Four days after he had arrived in Athens, the Swami embarked on the Russian steamer "Czar" for Egypt. In Egypt he was especially interested in the Cairo Museum, and his mind often reverted, in all the vividness of his historic imagination, to the reigns of those Pharaohs who had made Egypt mighty and a world-power in the days of old. And yet, in the innermost of his heart, he was withdrawn from all external matters. The underlying vanity of everything had made him reflect powerfully on the terrible bondage of Maya. The Sphinx and the Pyramids brought on, as it were, a world-weariness. The meditative habit, which had revealed itself ever since his second visit to the West in intenser forms, now reached a veritable climax. In Paris, oftentimes his mind had been far aloof from his environment ; and here in Egypt it seemed as if he were turning the last pages in the Book of Experience. Even the days spent on the Nile amidst the glories of ancient temples and rich scenery did not affect him. And one who was with him at the time said: "How tired and world-weary he seemed !"

And then there were other factors ! In far-off India Mr. Sevier, his great friend and disciple, had left the body ; and the Swami had perceived this intuitively. He was all the more restless to return to India. Thus one day quite suddenly he told his companions that he would depart for India. They

Koviloor Digital Library

were all saddened at this news. Madame Calvé using a Roman Catholic expression had always addressed him as *Mon Père*, "My Father." To Miss MacLeod he was Guru and friend in one. To Monsieur Blois he was a great thinker and Man of God. Thus it was with a feeling, partly of sadness and partly of resignation, that they saw him last when he extended his hands to them in a final benediction.

The Swami boarded the first steamer for India, a Peninsular and Oriental vessel. When the steamer touched Indian shores, he was beside himself with joy. His longing to be with his *gurubhais* and disciples was now about to be realised. He also desired to see and console Mrs. Sevier. His home-coming was entirely *incognito*. Only on the way from Bombay to Calcutta did he meet with one person who knew him, and this meeting proved of great happiness to both. The Swami was dressed in European fashion and was thus not readily recognisable. At all events, it was Monmatha Nath Bhattacharya whom he met in the railway compartment. Both he and his old friend stared at each other for a moment so as to be sure; and then it was much conversation and great joy.

On the ninth of December, 1900, the Swami arrived at the Belur monastery late at night. His brother-monks and the Brahmacharins were partaking of their meal, when the gardener came running and out of breath to them with the news, 'A Sahib has come!" The man had been sent with all haste to bring the key of the gate. Immediately there was much excitement and speculation as to who the Sahib might be who had come at that late hour and what his business with them was. Then to their great surprise the Sahib rushed into their midst; and when they saw who the Sahib was, there was no sleeping that night. "O Swamiji has come! Swamiji has come!" they all cried out excitedly. They could not believe their eyes. In true boyish fashion he had climbed over the gate, not waiting for the servant to return for the Swami laughingly remarked that hearing the bell ring for supper he feared

Koviloor Digital Library

nothing might be left for him unless he hastened. At once an *asana* was spread for him and he was served with a large helping of the *Khitchrhi* which was the food prepared for that night. He pertook of it with great zest, as it was many months since he had tasted it. Later the monks enjoyed several delightful hours while Swamiji chatted to them about his varied experiences in the West. They were happy beyond measure. He had come back to them, altogether unexpectedly, he their Leader, their Gurubhai, their Noren, their Guru, their All-in-All. The whole night passed in a confusion of excitement and in joy. No words can describe their feeling. It was ecstasy and sweet human happiness in one ; and now, though they knew it not, he was to be with them unto the end.

On this, his last visit to the West, the Swami said that when he had first visited the Occident, he was impressed with its power and organisation and with its apparent democracy of conditions; but now he saw its commercial spirit as composed for the most of greed, selfishness, and struggle for privilege and power. He was averse to the exploitation systems through which small business interests were swallowed up by large combinations, and that was tyranny indeed. "A strong habit of combination he was able to admire, but what beauty of combination was there, amongst a pack of wolves?" He said to someone that in his riper experience of Western life, it now appeared to him "like hell," and he held that "China had gone nearer to the ideal conception of human ethics than newer countries had ever done or could do."

Before closing the chapter it will be interesting to know the Sister Nivedita's impression of the Master's bearing during his last visit to the West. She says :—

"The outstanding impression made by the Swami's bearing, during all these months of European and American life, was one of almost complete indifference to his surroundings. Current estimates of value left him entirely unaffected. He was never in any way startled or incredulous under success, being too deeply convinced of the greatness of the power that worked through him, to be surprised by it. But neither

Koviloor Digital Library

was he unnerved by external failure. Both victory and defeat would come and go. He was their witness. * * *

"He moved fearless and unhesitant through the luxury of the West. As determinedly as I had seen him in India, dressed in the two garments of simple folk, sitting on the floor and eating with his fingers, so, equally without doubt or shrinking, was his acceptance of the complexity of the means of living in America or France. Monk and king, he said, was obverse and reverse of a single medal. From the use of the best, to the renunciation of all, was but one step. India had thrown all her prestige in the past, round poverty. Some prestige was in the future to be cast round wealth.

"Rapid changes of fortune, however, must always be the fate of one who wanders from door to door, accepting the hospitality of foreign peoples. These reversals he never seemed to notice. No institution, no environment, stood between him and any human heart. His confidence in that Divine-within-Man of which he talked, was as perfect, and his appeal as direct, when he talked with the imperialist aristocrat or the American millionaire, as with the exploited and oppressed. But the outflow of his love and courtesy was always for the simple.

* * * * * * *

"Thus, student and citizen of the world as others were proud to claim him, it was yet always on the glory of his Indian birth that he took his stand. And in the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk who stood revealed."

Koviloor Digital Library

CXX

VISIT TO MAYAVATI.

The Swami is seen again in his very own atmosphere,—that of his beloved India and that of intense monasticism. Though now almost ruined in health he was again to resume the direction of his Indian work and of the teaching and training of his brother-monks and disciples at the Belur Math, the central institution of the Ramakrishna Mission. Here workers were to be systematically trained, the devotional spirit to be imparted and man-making to be the ideal realised. Besides the huge task of directing the Belur monastery, the Swami had other large and important interests. Leaving out of consideration the movements under his direction in Europe and America, and his voluminous correspondence, he had to impart an immense amount of private teaching to numerous visitors who daily flocked to him. Moreover the conductors of the centres of the Order and of his three magazines in India, which existed for the propaganda of his ideas, looked up to him for final approval of their policy and spirit. So he had to direct in a general way all the institutions started by him and to see that they taught and preached the ideas and plans of work they represented.

Thus when he returned to India it was to enter again into the labyrinth of work; but before doing so, his first object was to visit the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama for the sake of Mrs. Sevier. On his arrival at the Math on the ninth of December, he had the confirmation of his premonition as regards the passing away of his beloved disciple, Mr. J. H. Sevier, which had occurred on the 28th of October 1900. He at once telegraphed to Mrs. Sevier to say that he was coming to Mayavati, the date to be made known before starting. In reply he was asked to inform her of it at least eight days beforehand to enable

Koviloor Digital Library

the Brotherhood to make the necessary arrangements, such as securing coolies for luggage and a Dandy from distant villages and sending them down four day's journey to Kathgodam. But Swamiji being unaware of these things and anxious to hasten up, at once sent a wire saying that he was leaving Calcutta on the 27th of December and was to reach Kathgodam on the 29th. It was on the afternoon of the twenty-fifth of December that the telegram reached Mayavati. Mayavati being sixty-five miles from the Kathgodam railway station, the securing of coolies from distant villages within a day and then marching them to Kathgodam within two days was a task which seemed almost hopeless. The inmates of the Ashrama were in despair; moreover because they thought that it was quite probable that, if he failed to find anybody from Mayavati waiting for him at Kathgodam on the day he would arrive there, the Swami might go up to Almora and become the guest of his old-time friend, Lala Badri Sah, and that his uncertain health might compel him to postpone indefinitely his desire of visiting the Ashrama. Their fears proved to be not groundless, for the Swami had also telegraphed before leaving Calcutta to his Almora friend, in order to be sure of meeting someone at the station in case anyone from Mayavati failed to come in time; and consequently on the day he reached Kathgodam, Lala Govind Lal Sah was present to escort him to Almora. But Mayavati had not been behindhand. When all despaired, the Swami Virajananda volunteered to procure the necessary coolies and himself proceed to Kathgodam. The Dandymen and luggage coolies were secured at uncommonly high rates and the journey was made afoot, the party reaching Kathgodam by forced marches at 12 p. m. on the 28th. The Swami Virajananda had by all manner of means secured the good will of the men.

Swamiji arrived on the morning of the twenty-ninth in company with the Swamis Shivananda and Sadananda. When he heard of the Swami Virajananda's achievement he exclaimed with the true Guru's pride: "That's my man!"

Koviloor Digital Library

The Swami was pressed to travel first to Almora, but was finally dissuaded by the entreaties of the Swami Virajananda. For the latter's sake a day's halt was made at Kathgodam. Besides, the Swami himself was feeling feverish and was advised to rest for the day before undertaking the hardships of a hill journey.

The Swami could not have chosen a worse time for coming to the hills. The winter of 1900—1901 proved unusually severe, and particularly so in these days when he visited Mayavati. The story of the journey told here in detail, will be interesting to the devotees of the Swami Vivekananda, for therein the Master is seen in an intimate bearing with his disciples and the journey itself was romantic.

The next morning before starting, Swamiji knowing how tired Virajananda must be, was particularly solicitous that he should have a pony. The management of the whole journey devolved upon the Swami Virajananda. He also did the cooking, attended on the Swami at his meals, and performed all sorts of services for his comfort. These he had had the privilege of doing to the great satisfaction of his Guru during his stay at the Belur monastery and in Calcutta before his second visit to the West. The Swami Sadananda looked after the Swami's dress, luggage and his other personal and immediate needs. All throughout the first day's march the Swami was as happy as a child. The party halted for their midday meal at Bhim Tal, Swamiji himself superintending the cooking. They reached Dhari in the evening, making seventeen miles, and stopped for the night at the Dak-bungalow.

The day following proved rainy in the early morning and it threatened snow. However, the party left Dhari late in the morning and the journey to be made was fifteen miles. The sky was still overcast with heavy clouds; therefore the Swami Virajananda, who had taken all the responsibility of the journey, had every reason for anxiety, fearing, unless great hurry was made, the snow-fall would be heavy and great discomfort would have to be endured. He feared most for the Swami, whose

Koviloor Digital Library

health necessitated every precaution. After coming about two miles it began to rain steadily and it was also foggy; snowflakes appeared, but not enough to cover the ground. By and by snow began to fall persistently, but Swamiji took it as good fun and talked of Swiss scenery and blizzards. Later the ground being thick with snow, his Dandy-bearers slipped several times in the descents, but he was not nervous at all. On the other hand, all the while he was exceedingly merry and kept up the spirits of his Dandy-men by talking humourously with them, one of whom was interesting in two ways, namely, that he had been married several times and had lost all his wives, and that he knew, so he claimed, the whole of Chandi by heart passages of which he recited for the Swami's edification. The peculiarities of his intonation and the queer mistake sand confusions that he made with the text amused all, but the Swami corrected him here and there and encouraged him to go on. He humourously addressed him as "Panditji", which greatly flattered him. For fun's sake he then asked the man if he would like to marry, again to which the latter replied, "Of course I would. But where shall I find money for my wife's dowry"? On Swamiji saying, "Suppose I give it to you," the old man was delighted and assured him that he would consider it a very great favour.

The party moved on slowly through biting wind and snow, and it was nearly 3 p.m. when they arrived at Paurhapani, seven miles and a half from Dhari. There was a small shop here, where passing travellers halted for an hour or two to cook their meals. Here the Swami's men, who had borne him ahead of the party, implored him that they might be permitted to have tea for themselves; thus warmed and refreshed, they said, they would proceed rapidly on to Mournalla, the destination in view. The Swami taking pity on them assented and promised to pay for their refreshment, and soon the men were smoking their *hookahs* lazily and blowing at a bad fire in an effort to make the damp fuel burn. When the Swami Virajananda arrived, he grew all the

Koviloor Digital Library

more uneasy, fearing that there was every possibility of the whole party spending the night in that shop. It was a miserable hut of one room, some odd fifteen by twenty feet, and the roof was badly thatched with straw. The room held under its roof the shop, the kitchen and the sleeping-place of the owner, and there was a pile of firewood in one corner. The smoke from the damp wood in the fireplace, which was a mere hole in the ground in the middle of the room, was terrific ; the fire itself was never out, slumbering logs being kept always for the benefit of travellers who came often to pick up a little live charcoal for their *Chhilums* and also for starting fire for their cooking. In this limited space the party made themselves comfortable as well as they could, while the men prepared their tea in an adjoining shed which had no walls, and the roof being of twigs, supported by a few poles, rain and snow dripped through constantly. Time flew ; once before the fire with their *hookahs* in hand, the men were in no hurry to start. Soon it was five o'clock and getting dark; now it was evident that the party must spend the night in this "awful hole" as all called it. Mournalla was impossible.

Then the Swami became furious in his child-like impatience, and roared at them. They were all fools for having allowed him to undertake such a journey when there was the chance of a snow-fall. The eldest of them should have been wiser ; the youngest should never have dissuaded him from his intention of visiting Almora first. All remained quiet, and Swamiji became after a time grave and silent. The Swami Virajananda had heard the reprimand of his Master with great uneasiness, especially because of the fear lest he falls ill on the way in the midst of jungles ; but he felt nevertheless that he had nothing to be blamed for. It had been the Swami's mistake, he said respectfully after a while, to have allowed the men to rest in preparing the tea and while away their time. The matter should have been left to him to decide as he knew the ways of the men better. If the stop had not been made, *somehow* they would have reached the

Koviloor Digital Library

Mournalla Dak-bungalow by the evening. The Swami listened in silence, like a guilty child who is cognisant of his fault, and then with sweet lovableness accosted the disciple, saying, "Now come! Do not mind anything I said. The father rebukes the son. Now we should make the best of our situation." He then asked the disciple to massage his spine a little as he was feeling a chill at his back.

This incident was another illustration of the manner in which he submitted even to his disciples when he felt himself in the wrong. He was again merry now, merry over his situation, as if it was great fun. He made himself merry even with the shopkeeper as if he was his old chum, and promised him good *bucksish*. In the course of the hearty talk which followed, Virajananda told Swamiji, "It is a significant event that you with your disciples would be in this plight on the night which marks the passing of the nineteenth century and the advent of the twentieth." Swamiji smiled in a thoughtful way.

To add to their anxiety, it was suddenly discovered that the Swami Sadananda and Lala Govind Lal Sah were not with the party; they had gone far ahead and had taken it for granted that the others were following. The Swami's mind was not relieved even when told that they must have by that time reached the Dak-bungalow, for there was as much chance of their losing the way in the dark and the snow. He could not rest content until a man was found who, in consideration of a large *bucksish* consented to run to Mournalla and back to find the missing members and inform them of their safe arrival there. Still another untoward incident occurred at Paurhapani; this was when the Swami Shivananda's horse, which might never have seen snow before, dashed back at full speed to Kathgodam as soon as its rider dismounted. Neither the horse, nor the *syce*, was ever heard of again! The result was that the youngest member of the party was forced to travel the remaining distance afoot, having offered his own horse to the Swami's Gurubhai.

Koviloor Digital Library

That night the Swami and his companions had as food, cooked by the *baniya*, "horse-chappaties", as they called them, each half an inch thick and hardly well-baked, and a potato curry, with the potatoes so hard that they challenged human teeth to bite them. That night sleep was out of the question. The smoke was suffocating and snow and rain dripped on to the heads of the weary travellers, who were in no gracious mood under such disagreeable circumstances. As a climax to this unpleasantness the Swami, lying awake, heard about midnight a conversation between the shopkeeper and one of his relatives concerning "these fellows" which quite annoyed him. The *baniya* had no idea that the Swami understood Paharhi, the language of the hill-men, and so began freely to abuse his visitors, saying that he ought not to have inconvenienced himself by giving them shelter and that the very first thing in the morning he would get rid of them all. Naturally the Swami was disgusted with the man, who had begged him to remain the next day as well, should the snow fall heavier and the way be yet more impassable. But it did not prevent Swamiji from giving him good *buckshish*, before leaving, indeed more than the man ever expected. Thus passed the last night of the year, 1900, an eventful night, indeed.

The next morning, the party continued their journey, through twelve inches of snow. The rested Dandy-men went at a quick pace and Virajananda determining to keep up with the Swami had to run most of the way. Swamiji heartily enjoyed the charming scenery of the snow-covered hills and trees and often exclaimed pointing to some ugly snow-capped stump or bouldeer, "Look! How snow makes every thing beautiful!" He chatted freely with his disciple and was full of mirth. When they arrived at the Dak-bungalow, the Swami rejoiced to find there the Swami Sadananda and his companion. Welcomed to a cheery fire, a warm bright room and a hearty meal, he was in a very happy mood and gave an amusing account of his last night's experiences, as if he had enjoyed them immensely. He

Koviloor Digital Library

spoke in the most admiring terms of Virajananda, saying that no words were adequate in praise of his cool judgment and self-possession under stress and provocation, and ended by blessing him from the depth of his heart. The party halted at Mournalla for the day.

The next morning, the second of January, 1901, the snow thawed and the journey to the next two stages, Devidhura and Dhunaghat, a distance of twenty-one miles, was pleasant. The Swami walked a part of the way towards the end, and in doing so breathed hard and was exceedingly tired. He supported himself on a staff and on the shoulder of the Swami Virajananda, "as an old and affectionate father might lean on his young son".—Pointing to his physical condition he said to his disciple, "See, how weak and aged I have become. I feel even this short walk so difficult, while in former days I thought nothing of walking twenty to twenty-five miles in the mountains!" His companion was much distressed at this statement and was really alarmed when a moment later he heard him say, "You see, my son, now I am coming near to the end!" In fact, his health was very poor, and there was danger at any time of a complete breakdown. Aye, at any time, the end might come.

The next day the Swami arrived at Mayavati. On the opposite hill he caught a view of the Ashrama buildings and the site pleased him immensely. When he came to the stream in the khud below, he heard the bell of the monastery striking, twelve, and he was so anxious to reach the Ashrama that he mounted a horse and spurred it on. The monastery had been artistically decorated for this great occasion—the visit of the Leader of the Order, the revered Guru of the Brotherhood. Evergreens and flowers and water-filled jars had been placed at the entrances, as marks of an auspicious and hallowed event. Needless to say, the joy of the disciples at the Ashrama knew no bounds at meeting Swamiji after so long a time.

Unfortunately most of the time during the Swami's stay Mayavati was snow-bound, so that he was compelled

Koviloor Digital Library

to remain indoors and could not take long walks much as he desired to do so. He was assigned, a room on the first storey of the Ashrama, but the cold proving too intense for his comfort, he was lodged from the ninth of January in the library-room on the ground floor, which had a big fire-place. He remained at Mayavati until the eighteenth. On the sixth he received a number of visitors from Champawat ; on the ninth, Mr. Beadon, a son of a late Liuetenant Governor of Bengal and a tea-planter came from Chirapani ; on the eleventh the Tahsildar Saheb, together with other persons, visited him. All during his stay the Swami exhibited the symptoms of declining health. Though he was often literally beaming with *bon mots* and jovialities, it was noticed that he could hardly stand any physical strain. Several times he had a tendency to asthma, though not severe, but nevertheless it was alarming to all who were with him. His birthday fell on the thirteenth of January, making him thirty-eight years of age. The day following was Mr. Sevier's birthday. He would have been fifty-six that day.

His conversations were a constant source of inspiration to the Mayavati Brotherhood, and of blessed memory are those happy days at Mayavati. One day in the course of a talk he became remarkably eloquent and suddenly got up from his seat and paced to and fro, his voice raised and his eyes aflame with emotion, as if he was lecturing to a huge audience. He was speaking of his Western disciples, of their exemplary devotion and loyalty to him, their readiness to jump into the mouth of death if he so commanded,—and not one or two but dozens who would do the same,—how they had served him lovingly, silently, right royally, and how they would renounce everything for his sake, at one word from him. "Look at Captain Sevier," cried the Swami "how he died a martyr to the cause, at Mayavati !" On another occasion, speaking of obedience, he said : "Obedience and respect cannot be enforced by word of command ; neither can it be exacted. It depends upon the *man*, upon his loving nature and exalted character.

Koviloor Digital Library

None can resist true love and greatness....." At the same time he emphasised the necessity of loyalty to the work undertaken, and loyalty to the organisation and to the man who is placed in charge of a centre.

One day he addressed the Swami Swarupananda on the ideas and the work that he wished to be carried out from the Ashrama, and charged him to push on with them with great zeal and energy. The latter said that as for himself he would do all he could, but without the co-operation of the brother-monks of the Ashrama and their assurance of remaining at the place for at least three consecutive years, the task was beyond his powers. Swamiji understood and when all were gathered before him he broached the subject and asked one after another if they agreed to do so. All acceded, as they knew it was Swamiji's wish. But when Virajananda's turn came he humbly but firmly said that he intended to pass sometime exclusively in meditation elsewhere, living upon *Madhukari-bhiksha*. Swamiji vigorously tried to dissuade him from this latter idea, saying among other things: "Don't ruin your health by practising austerities, but try to profit by our experience. We have subjected ourselves to extreme austerities, but what has been the result?—the imparing of our health in the best years of manhood, from which we are still suffering. Besides. how could you think of meditating for hours? Enough if you can concentrate your mind for five minutes, or even one minute, and for that purpose a certain hour in the morning and evening is what is needed. For the rest of the time one has to occupy himself with studies and some work for the general good. My disciples are to emphasise work more than austerities. Work itself should be a part of their *sadhana* and their austerities." Virajananda admitted the truth of his Master's words, but respectfully submitted that with all that, austerity was needful for gaining and becoming fixed in strength, character and conservation of spiritual powers, which were imperative for pursuing the life of *nishkama karma*, or work without attachment. Seeing the disciple

Koviloor Digital Library

still stubborn Swamiji fired away at him in his characteristic way, but Virajananda well aware of his Master's mood kept silent. When he was gone on some business, Swamiji told the others that though he had been speaking thus he knew at heart that Kali Krishna was right, that he understood his feelings, and that, in truth, he, more than anybody, glorified the life of meditation and the freedom of the monk. And he added that the memories of his *parivrajaka* days,—when he lived on *bhiksha*, with his mind fixed on God, having no thought of the world,—were among the sweetest and the happiest of his whole life, and that he would give anything if he could again have that unknownness, freed from all cares of public life. On being questioned later, Virajananda however, thought it best to yield to his Guru and abide by his commands.

The Swami was as free as a child in the seclusion of his own Ashrama and would speak with Mrs. Sevier as a child with his own mother. Sometimes he would become impatient, but never was there any sting in his words, sharp though they were ; and invariably he would repay his own moments of irritation with the compound interest of added sweetness to those about him. He was their blessed and beloved leader ; and it was always found that his very remonstrances were some form of education, or some blessing in disguise. The slightest, sudden shock unnerved him. As he said to Mrs. Sevier, "It is true, my body, to all intents and purposes, is now gone ; but as for my brain, I can think as clearly as and even better than at any previous time !"

Of all the many points of view that one gains of the snows at Mayavati, that at Dharamghar, the highest hill within the Mayavati boundaries, affords the finest vision of the snow range. Here, shortly after his arrival, the Swami spent one morning together with the inmates of the monastery. He was extraordinarily pleased with the site and its charming scenery and said that he must have a hermitage erected on that very spot, where he could meditate in undisturbed solitude. The lake-side walk was also

Koviloor Digital Library

enjoyable to him. One day, walking with Mrs. Sevier and other disciples there, he said with the most lovable childlikeness, "In the latter part of my life, I shall give up all public work and would like to pass my days in writing books and whistling merry tunes by this lake, like a free child!" While at Mayavati he received an invitation from Lala Badri Sah to be his guest at Almora, but this he was forced to decline and instead asked the old gentleman if he would find it practicable to come to Mayavati. He gladly consented, and met the Swami there on the tenth of January, in company with his youngest brother, Lala Mohan Lal Sah. Lala Govind Lal Sah was already there. On the twelfth, there was an Ice-cream party, through the efforts of the Swami Virajananda, who made a huge, delicious block of it with the help of the thick coating of ice that settles at this season on the surface of the lake. The Swami was delighted with this favourite dish of his.

A Thakur-ghar, or worship-room, containing the Image of Sri Ramakrishna, had from sometime previous been established at the Ashrama at the earnest desire of some of the inmates. When the Swami arrived, he chanced one morning to see this room and found that regular Thakur-Puja was being conducted in the Advaita Ashrama, with flowers, incense and other offerings. He said nothing at the time, but that evening when all were gathered about the fireplace, he spoke vehemently in denunciation of Thakur-Puja in an Advaita Ashrama. It should never have been done. Here attention was to be paid only to the subjective elements of religion, such as, private meditation, individual and collective studying of the Scriptures, and the teaching and culture of the highest spiritual monism, free from any dualistic weakness or dependence. In the prospectus that had been issued by this Ashrama, the Swami himself had enjoined that here the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple, free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations, was to be taught and practised. This Ashrama had been dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone. He had thus the right to criticise. Be-

Koviloor Digital Library

sides, it was under the training of his own Master and by his blessing that he himself had become an Advaitin, and he was well aware that while Sri Ramakrishna had ordained him to preach and teach all religious ideas, he had emphasised those of the Advaitavada, in his case. Though the Swami let them know how strongly he felt against the introducing of the external form of worship there, yet he did not order them to break up the worship-room at once. He would not take any immediate step to shock the feelings of those who were responsible for it. That would be using his power. They themselves must see their own mistake and grow out of it. But the Swami's uncompromising attitude on the matter,—in which his two Advaitin disciples, the Swami Swarupananda and Mrs. Sevier, fully shared, and which acted upon the other members' sense of keeping strictly to the avowed principles of the institution, for the furtherance of which they had been deputed by Swamiji himself,—led to the discontinuance of worship and, ultimately, to the dissolution of the *Thakur-ghar*. Finally, one, who still doubted if it was right for him to profess himself a member of the Advaita Ashrama with his leaning towards Dualism, appealed to the Holy Mother as a final tribune, to receive the satisfying reply: "Sri Gurudeva was all Advaita and preached Advaita. Why, therefore, should you not follow the Advaita? All his disciples *are* Advaitins!" When the Swami returned to the Belur Math, it was in a tone of despair that he alluded to the above matter and remarked: "I thought of having one centre at least in which the external worship of Sri Ramakrishna will not find a place. But going there I found that the Old Man had already established himself even there! Well, well!"

The Swami was by no means idle at Mayavati. His correspondence was frequent; and besides giving religious instructions, he wrote at Mayavati three essays for the "Prabuddha Bharata", entitled "Aryans and Tamilians", "The Social Conference Address," and "Stray Remarks on Theosophy." The first of these articles is an historical piece

Koviloor Digital Library

of remarkable insight; the second was a reply to Mr. Justice Ranade's Presidential Address at the Indian Social Conference of 1900. While admitting the remarkable liberalism and the sincere patriotism which characterised the spirit of the great Marhatta leader, the Swami denounced his criticism of the Sannyasins, and his reply was a passionate defence of Indian monasticism and of its intrinsic value in the light of Indian history. There is also a touch therein of intellectual boldness and humour. His "Stray Remarks on Theosophy" was a sincere and interesting criticism. Besides these, he made an excellent translation of the *Nasadiya Sukta* of the Rig-Veda, at the special request of a friend, a distinguished man of science.

There were many incidents during the Swami's stay at Mayavati, illustrating the great love which his disciples bore towards him and the great, and yet childlike nature of the Master. He was always himself with those whom he loved, and they in their turn were rejoiced when they found him natural with them. One day, the dinner being exceedingly late, he became impatient at the evident carelessness and lack of punctuality. He blamed everyone and went to the kitchen to reprimand the Swami Virajananda who was then cooking. But seeing the latter in that room thick with smoke, and doing his best, blowing at a bad fire, he came away without saying anything to him. When the food was brought, a long while after, the Swami said, "Take it away! I shall have none of it!" But the disciple, knowing his Master well, said nothing. He placed the dishes near him and waited. Then, like a child, the Swami sat down and commenced to eat. When he tasted the food, he was delighted; all his anger was suddenly gone; he highly praised the cooking, and made a most hearty meal. In the course of it he said in a most endearing way, "Now I know why I got so angry; I was frightfully hungry." To understand the sweet impatience of the Master it is necessary to be first of all an Oriental, for in the Orient plain-spokenness and sweet wilfulness have no bitterness or rudeness about them; on the other

Koviloor Digital Library

hand, it is all the outcome of the sweetest intimacy and the feeling of real kinship. Understanding the difficulty which Westerners would have in accepting the Oriental point of view, he said to a certain American disciple on the very day of his arrival at Mayavati : "You see how they serve me ! To a Westerner, especially to an American, this devotion may seem servile, and you may be shocked at the way I am accepting all this service without remonstrance. But you must understand the Indian idea. Then everything will be clear to you. This is the spontaneous devotion of the Shishya to the Guru, who looks only to the motive. This is one of the means by which the Shishya becomes spiritualised." And as for the Swami, he himself knew no limit in his service to others, particularly to his own *gurubhais*, and even to his disciples.

The fact that he was confined to the house most of the time because of the frequent snow-falls, and that his physical condition was not strong enough to bear the severe cold, made the Swami impatient to go down. But it was found to be most difficult to secure coolies even by paying them at a much higher rate, as none was willing to make the arduous journey through snow. This only added to his restlessness. On the evening previous to his departure, when he was talking in a pleasant mood to his disciples as to what should be done if no coolies were available, Virajananda came to the fore with the remark : "Never mind, Swamiji ! In that case we ourselves will carry you down somehow !" At this the Swami laughed outright and said merrily, "Oh ! I see, you are scheming to throw me into the Khud!" It was decided to go down by the other way, *via* Tanakpur to Pilibhit. Then, calling the Swami Sadananda to his side the Swami said, "See here, the management of my trip down shall be left entirely to Virajananda. He has cool nerves and never makes a fuss. Neither you nor I should have anything to do in the matter, do you understand ?" As things seemed hopeless, the Swami Swarupananda went himself early in the morning to the tea-plantation of Mr. Beadon, eight miles off,

Koviloor Digital Library

to see if he could spare some of his men. But to confuse matters, the man who had been sent from Mayavati into the villages two or three days ago, returned finally with the required number of coolies at noon. So, after the Swami had left Mayavati, he met the Swami Swarupananda on the way to Champawat returning with Mr. Beadon's tea-estate coolies. The latter, therefore, were dismissed with ample reward. Before leaving, a contention arose among the luggage coolies as usual, about the selection of their respective loads, but Virajananda knew how best to deal with them. The Swami became impatient at the delay; at this juncture, the Swami Virajananda respectfully told him to proceed ahead in his *dandy*, as he had been requested several times to do; and then, seeing him gone, the men would not like to remain behind. The effect was as anticipated.

All the way from Mayavati to Pilibhit the Swami was in excellent spirits. On the first night, at the Dak-bungalow at Champawat he talked with great fervour concerning Sri Ramakrishna, especially of his inner sight and of his judgment of men, saying that whatsoever his Master had said or predicted about men and matters had invariably proved true. Therefore, so far as his *gurubhais* were concerned, what Sri Ramakrishna had said of them, the Swami affirmed, had influenced his entire attitude to them. Especially speaking of those few whom Sri Ramakrishna had classified as *Ishvarakotis*, giving them a far higher position than the *Jivakotis*, who comprised all his other disciples, Swamiji said that he had, by his own insight and after repeated testings satisfied himself as to their superior intrinsic excellence. He added that though he might not always approve of the ways and opinions of one or other of them on certain occasions, and even might say hard things to them now and then, yet in his heart he always gave them a much higher position than the others, because Sri Ramakrishna had done so, and his judgment he accepted as unerring and unassailable. And in the course of his talk, he grew more and more eloquent, his

Koviloor Digital Library

eyes aflame, and light shining on his countenance; and repeatedly he exclaimed: "And above all, above all, I am *loyal*! I am loyal to the core of my heart!"

Speaking on another occasion, long ago, of the *Ishvarakotis*, Swamiji had said, "I can trust in them as I can in none else. I know that if the whole world desert me, they will stick to me, ever faithful, and ready to carry out my ideas and plans, even under the most impossible conditions." Sri Ramakrishna marked out seven of his disciples as *Ishvarakotis*. *Ishvarakotis*, he said, were those who have to take birth whenever an *Avatara* incarnates Himself; they are like His high officials belonging to the inmost circle of His devotees, His *antaranga-bhaktas*, whose mission in life is to complement His work, and to conserve His teachings. Thus, strictly speaking, though they are born with Realisation, they have no *Mukti*, and their Sadhanas are, unconsciously, only for the instruction of men. At the head of this class Sri Ramakrishna placed Swamiji.

The next morning, the party left for Deuri, fifteen miles off, and the Swami Swarupananda who had accompanied Swamiji to Champawat returned to Mayavati. At Deuri which was reached at 1 p.m., there was at first some difficulty, as no *chowkidar* could be found to open the Dak-bungalow; but fortunately, on trying the lock it came open, and so the party found accommodation. With the Swami were the Swamis Shivananda, Sadananda and Virajananda and Lala Govind Lal Sah. The last of the Swamis mentioned had charge of the cooking, and he found himself in a dilemma by reason of having put too much rice in the pot in preparing the meal, and it threatened to boil over before it was half-done. To add to his difficulty, Swamiji was sending one or other after him to enquire if the meal was ready, as it was getting late and he was very hungry. Virajananda was thinking of taking out some of the rice and adding water, when the Swami appeared before him and seeing his perplexity sat down and said: "You need do no such thing. Take my advice. Pour some

Koviloor Digital Library

ghee over the rice and put the lid upside down, and you will find presently that the rice is nicely cooked without any being taken away, and it will be more palatable too!" The disciple did as he was bidden; and as the result, the party found a most palatable dish served that afternoon, to which everyone did full justice.

At Tanakpur, fifteen miles away, where one reaches the plains, the Dak-bungalow was found to be occupied. Accommodation was accordingly secured in the bazaar on the upper floor of a grocer's shop, which proved very smoky from the constant cooking of parties of travellers below. The kind-hearted shopkeeper gave the Swami his own *charpoi*, or a grass-stringed bedstead, to sleep upon. But being too old and shaky, it cracked noisily at every movement of the Swami, giving warning that it might collapse with a crash at any moment. He was, however, in the best of spirits and made fun over this awkward situation.

On the next morning, riding-ponies were secured for the remainder of the journey to Pilibhit, for there was no railway from Tanakpur to Pilibhit at the time. The Swami Sadananda chose for himself the horse which seemed most spirited. He spurred it on, with the result that it went at full speed. When the Swami and his party had proceeded a mile or more from Tanakpur, he became anxious at not meeting Sadananda. Enquiring of a passer-by, they learned that the horse had bolted making his way through the field just ahead of them. All immediately alighted and went in that direction. Soon they found the missing monk, leading the horse, which had now become tired and submissive. It had thrown the rider into a ditch, an escapade from which he fortunately escaped unhurt. This incident brings to mind another that occurred at Khetri when the same monk tried a spirited horse and the Swami and others stood watching the experiment from the roof of the Rajah's palace. All were nervous, but after a time, the monk was seen with the horse galloping at full speed and yet under the complete control of his rider. This delighted the Swami and he said

Koviloor Digital Library

to him when he met him : "You are indeed a manly disciple, Sadananda Baba !"

Three miles from Tanakpur, the Swami and his party were greeted by Major Hennessy, who on espying them from his Bungalow came out and spoke a few hearty words to them. At 2 p. m. Khatima was reached. That evening Swamiji informed the Swami Shivananda that he would have to leave him at Pilibhit and go forth by himself to beg money for the maintenance and improvement of the Belur Math. In this connection he said : "Each member of the Belur monastery should go about preaching and teaching in India, and ultimately bring to the general fund at least two thousand rupees." The Swami Shivananda bowed in assent to the words of the Leader.

On the way to Pilibhit, the fourth and last day's journey, Swamiji rode a horse for some time, and seeing that the Swami Virajananda felt nervous at riding he said : "I will teach you how to ride !" After giving him necessary instructions he whipped his own horse which galloped off at full speed and he shouted out to Virajananda to do the same. But the latter's horse, seeing the others run, for they had also joined in the race, did not wait to be goaded. So for him it was a question of holding on, or falling off. At all events, he overcame his nervousness a good deal and joined in the general hilarity.

The party arrived at Pilibhit at four in the afternoon. They had eaten nothing on the way, lest delay be made and the train be missed. The Swami Sadananda and Lala Govind Lal Sah had gone on ahead, the former to get refreshments from the bazaar at Pilibhit, the latter to inform Pandit Bhowani Dutt Joshi, the Deputy Collector of the town, of the Swami's arrival. The former came to the railway station in company with his friends to welcome the Swami. A conversation ensued, in the course of which the subject of meat-eating was touched upon. The Panditji argued respectfully against it. But the Swami adduced facts and authorities from the Vedas and the Samhitas in proof of his claim and said, that even

Koviloor Digital Library

the Vedic Rishis ate and enjoined upon others to eat beef, the very name of which is now offensive to the ears of orthodox Hindus. In the old Vedic period it was a practice to kill cows in honour of guests and at certain ceremonies or on auspicious occasions, and he supported his rejoinder by dilating on the evils that had accrued in the degeneracy of the Hindu race through the fanaticism of anti-meat-eating, and the *deshacharas* and *lokacharas* of the so-called orthodoxists. Mr. Joshi listened in respectful silence, while all the station staff had gathered round, being deeply interested with every word that fell from the Swami's lips. It seemed as if he purposely wanted to give a hard knock to the exclusive orthodoxy of his Brâhman visitor, to whom caste was religion and custom everything. It must be remembered, however, that the Swami often argued vehemently against meat-eating in the case of those who aimed at living a purely spiritual life.

It was now late in the evening. Sadananda had not returned, though he had been absent ever since the arrival of the party at four o'clock. About half an hour before train time, the monk and Lala Govind Lal Sah, who had been sent to inquire after him, arrived with a huge basket full of *puris*, fry, curry and sweets. The delay had been caused by the determination of the monk to have the food prepared in his presence. The Swami, absorbed in his discussion with Mr. Joshi, had forgotten all about food. Then he modestly inquired of the latter whether he had any objection to their having food on the rug on which he and all the others were sitting. At this modesty and simplicity of the world-famous Sannyasin before him, the latter was struck with admiration. The Swami asked his *gurubhai* and disciples to eat from the basket at the same time as himself, he doing so indifferently, as his mind was riveted on the subject of his conversation. When the Panditji and his friends left the station, they congratulated themselves on having met Swamiji and heard his edifying talk abounding with a renovated outlook on Hindu religion and life. Before leaving, Mr. Bhowani Dutt invited

Koviloor Digital Library

the Swamis Shivananda and Virajananda for a short stay at his residence in Pilibhit.

An ugly incident occurred when Swamiji and the Swami Sadananda entered a second-class carriage in the train which had just arrived. Occupying the compartment was an English Colonel who rudely objected to having "natives" travel with him. Seeing that many persons had gathered round the carriage to pay respects to Swamiji, he did not venture to say anything to him but hastened out to the station-master and demanded to have the two "natives" ousted. The station-master came and respectfully begged the Swami to quit that compartment and get into another. Hardly had he finished his words when the Swami roared out, "How dare you say such a thing to me! Are you not ashamed?" The station-master hastily withdrew and the Colonel, thinking that everything had been satisfactorily carried out according to his orders, presently returned to the compartment, to find it still occupied by the Swami and his disciple. Then he dashed from one end of the platform to the other crying out, "Station-master! Station-master!" but the latter, finding himself, as it were, between the devil and the deep sea, had made himself scarce. The Saheb was furious, but seeing that the train was about to leave, thought it wise to hustle his baggage and himself into another compartment; and the Swami and his disciple chuckled over his discomfiture. Naturally, the Swami, who moved in the most distinguished circles of the East and West, resented such unpardonable rudeness from one who claimed to be a gentleman.

When the Swami arrived at the Belur Math from Mayavati, on the twenty-fourth of January, 1901, it was to the great pleasure of his *gurubhais* and disciples there, who had been anxiously looking forward to his return in their midst. About everything concerning the Advaita Ashrama, the Swami's words were those of highest praise. The charming scenery it commands, the precious soothing quiet of the Himalayan jungles, the fact that there the meditative tendency could easily become a habit, the

Koviloor Digital Library

loving kindness he had received from Mrs. Sevier, the unremitting service which had been so devoutly rendered him by the little band of his disciples at his Himalayan centre—all these and many more things, the Swami said, had made his visit to Mayavati a most happy one. In fact, he now much regretted that he had left the hills so soon. And he often dilated in glowing terms on the exemplary renunciation and devotion to the Ideal of one, on the beautiful faculty for *seva* of another, on the prodigious labour bestowed by still another to make ready the habitation of the monks, and on the zeal and endeavours of everyone there to carry out his plans and ideas.

Koviloor Digital Library

A WORD TO OUR READERS.

Now the end of the third volume is reached. But there is yet much to be recorded, not so much of public achievements, but of the Swami's private life crowded with facts of human interest touching the heart and soul. Though failing in health more and more, and in growing despair at being unable to continue his public work as formerly, the Master is seen, mostly in the seclusion of the Math at Belur, teaching and training his monastic disciples, delivering his ideas and message to them and to everybody who flocked to him for instruction, helping one and all to the best of his powers by his words, talks, letters and writings, but, above all, by the charm of his sweet and inspiring personality. We have not yet dealt with his plans and attempts at remodelling the Indian thought-world, with his re-stating of the entire contents of the *Sanatana Dharma* and the ancient Aryan culture, with the wave of religious transition that he brought about in India, and with the facts of one of the most eventful periods of his life. Moreover, the intense personal note which characterises the closing years of the Swami Vivekananda on earth, vividly reveals to the world the inner side of his life in its sweet simplicity, and in the grandeur of his thoughts and ideas—the inner man. As such, the biographers cannot feel that they have completed their great undertaking and fulfilled the responsibility they owed to the public without giving at some length a character-sketch of his personality, and dealing with the salient points of his ideas and message calculated to stimulate and uplift not only the present generation but also generations yet unborn.

Then again, there was a unity in his life of varied moods, that was beautiful to behold, a light which flashed through as many facets as those of a diamond, but which was notwithstanding *one light*. He was not a theorist; he was his ideas and teachings incarnate. And as such, a record of his life-

Koviloor Digital Library

story distinguishes it from an ordinary biography, and has to be treated not as a compilation of mere facts but as the spirit moves one to do. It was a matter of special satisfaction to the authors to have been supplied with many new facts since the work was undertaken, and these had to be utilised and new chapters added. It was found to be impossible to condense these into the third volume without spoiling their effect and divesting them of their important bearings and their intrinsic value.

Taking all these into consideration, the biographers of Swamiji's "Life" do not know whether to apologise to the public, or to congratulate themselves for extending their work to a fourth volume. The success which has attended the publication of the first two volumes, and the numerous letters of sincere appreciation and deep gratitude received from various quarters, justify them in believing that there exists a large number of readers who will hail with delight the announcement that they propose to publish a fourth volume to complete the "Life." And they venture to think that their readers will have the satisfaction of possessing an elaborate memorial of the great Master executed by his own disciples who are actuated by no other motive than a sincere desire of sharing with the outside public the blessings and revelations they have received at the hands of the Master, the light by whose fires they have warmed themselves,—the light which shines brighter and brighter as years roll on to eternity!

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

Koviloor Digital Library

PRINTER'S ERRORS.

PAGE	LINE	FOR	READ
14	6	a way	away
23	17	copions	copious
24	3	house	house and
33	11, 13, 14, 23, 27, 33	baloon	balloon
34	3	baloon	balloon
39	37	nteresting	interesting
44	19	ype	type
48	5	sen thim	sent him
48	14	Conperence	Conference
48	21	york	York
48	31	Schwam	Schwann
51	5	did	began
56	14	Even	'Even
79	3	inr	in-
122	10	temple-gardon	temple-garden
124		XCVII.	XCVIII.
126	1	ge at	great
129	8	*Muktapanesha*	*Muktapurusha*
129	8	*Videhamakta*	*Videhamukta*
135	23	himself began to speak	began to speak himself
141	11	of, India	of India
145	9	before	before his
176	37	othewise	otherwise
204	3	not with-standing	notwithstanding
209	13	an	on
209	35	in both	both in
212	28	धर्म्मस्य सर्बधर्म्म	धर्मस्य सर्वधर्म
216	25	so called	so-called
217	20	snowwhite	snow-white
225	17	and in	and
226	33	questionand-answer	question-and-answer
278	33	strong,	strong
287	21	will feel	feel
292	20	on	on the

Koviloor Digital Library

321	27	*nisthâ*	*nishthâ*
321	28	bigotted	bigoted
321	33	house-holder's	householder's
325	10	words,	words
340	15	Hon	Hon'ble
341	17	whi chhappened	which happened
369	23	reported	retorted
374	25	He	"He
378	1	the philosophy	philosophy
380	13	lovingcare	loving care
383	19	not-	note-
383	20	eworthy	worthy
384	31	folllows	follows
388	1	some-what	somewhat
393	11	with——·	with ——
400	15	Yajana	Yajna
400	17	Scrifice	Sacrifice
403	1	West	West."
406	17	ofthe	of the
406	33	aginst	against
410	18	step and	and
412	17	MacLeod	MacLeod.
413	6	Europe !"	Europe !""
416	36	return	return,
417	4	pertook	partook
419	15	Moreover	Moreover,
422	13	heart	heart,
422	15	mistake sand	mistakes and
422	19	marry, again	marry again,
422	21	dowry"?	dowry ?"
425	30	bouldeer	boulder
426	13	son"·——	son."
426	27	striking,	striking
427	2	assigned,	assigned
427	2	first	first
427	8	Liuetenant Governor	Lieutenant-Governor
427	33	Swami	Swami,